



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N32 August 8, 2021

KING JESUS

"Parting Words"

Mark 16:9-20

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

Hebrews 1:3



How do we know what we know about Jesus?

As we consider the important competency of belief in Jesus Christ, we must ask, "What it is exactly that we believe about him?" Our CBC Core Competency affirms that we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead. These beliefs are foundational to our understanding of God, our value to God and our hope from God. Before we can fully understand these beliefs about Jesus, we must also consider how we arrived at such beliefs. How do we know about Jesus' identity, mission, passion and triumph in order to believe and trust him? Today, we know what we know about Jesus primarily through what has been written about him. The Gospel of Mark is a stellar example of a surviving first century text giving witness to the life, ministry and mission of Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-4 emphasizes that "God spoke" both in the past and through his Son in the present to reveal the superiority of Jesus that commands faith and devotion. God's "speech" is preserved for us in holy writings or Scriptures that were collected, copied, and taught by the community of faith. We have no Christian theology, no Christology, no ecclesiology without sacred texts.

Larry Hurtado, in his book *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*, distinguishes early Christianity in comparison to other sects as a "bookish religion." He observes that Christianity since its inception read, copied, taught and wrote in excess compared to other religions. "Early Christianity was phenomenally prolific and varied in literary output. The number and substance of the writings produced is all the more remarkable when we remember that all through this early period Christians were still relatively few in number and small as a percentage of the total Roman-era population... For other religious movements of the day, such as Mithraism or the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, for example there are the remains of numerous shrines and dedicatory inscriptions but not texts. For early Christianity, however, there are no known church structures or inscriptions prior to sometime in the third century AD, but there is this huge catalog of texts This is yet another indication that early

Christianity was different from at least most other religious groups of the time" (Hurtado, 119-120).

Within this explosion of first and second century Christian literature, the faith community distinguished between writings of men and writings from God. Scripture was seen as "God's speech" and was informative and authoritative for faith and practice. The Old Testament was affirmed as Scripture by Jesus and his followers. By the end of the first century, much if not all of the New Testament as we know it today was recognized by churches as the "Word of God." The formal name for the phenomenon of recognizing which writings were to be revered as "Scripture" is often called "canonization." The "canon" is the recognized collection of writings esteemed by Christians to be "God's Word."

Biblical canonization was more of a process than a single event. Churches recognized writings as coming from God related to apostolic authorship, consistency with apostolic witness, and a sense of God's use and leading through specific writings. Irenaeus and Tertullian both used the term "New Testament" in their writings in the Second Century (AD 170-220). In AD 367, Athanasius, bishop of the eastern face of the church, listed all 27 of books of the New Testament in his annual Easter communication. In AD 397, the Council of Carthage, a gathering of Christians representing those in the western Mediterranean, affirmed these same 27 books as "from God" forming the canon of the New Testament. These are the same 27 we find in our Bibles today.

"One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa—at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397—but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of these communities" (F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, 27).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

12 Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. 13 These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

Draw a line connecting all mentions of the name "Jesus" throughout this passage.

Circle each word marking time or a passage of time in this passage.

- Underline each occurrence of the word "appeared" in this passage.
- Count each question Jesus asks by placing a sequential number in front of each question.
- Draw a box around the word "they" in Mark 16:11 and draw an arrow from that word to the people connected with that word in Mark 16:10.
- Double underline the responses of those who heard in Mark 16:9-14.
- Draw a box around the charge given by Jesus in Mark 16:15.
- In Mark 16:20, place brackets around what the disciples did and double brackets around what the Lord did.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. From your understanding, describe the difficulties presented by Mark 16:9-20.
2. What do you think happened to the ending of the Gospel of Mark?
3. The inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 (often called the “Longer Ending”) did not seem to bother many early followers of Christ. Why do you think the ending of Mark is such a large problem for many today?
4. Provided that most of Mark 16:9-20 is found in other Gospels and the Book of Acts, what do you find most encouraging about these verses?
5. What do you find most challenging about Mark 16:9-20?
6. Belief is an important element of Mark 16:9-20. What did the followers of Jesus initially not believe and then later believe according to his passage?
7. What actions were the followers of Jesus to perform according to his charge in Mark 16:15-16?
8. What New Testament examples can you identify with the signs mentioned in Mark 16:17-18?
9. What was the purpose of all the signs mentioned in Mark 16:17-18 (consider Mark 16:20)?
10. What changed from the beginning of Mark 16:9-20 to the end of this passage?

Commentary On The Text

While the Gospel of Mark is considered without question a sterling member of the canon of the New Testament, the ending of the Gospel of Mark has caused concern for many, particularly scholars and skeptics. The verses found after Mark 16:8 present one of the most difficult textual issues in the entire New Testament. The NIV translation of the Gospel of Mark supplies a brief description of the dilemma as follows: “The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20.” Thomas Constable provides more details about this matter: “The two oldest Greek uncial manuscripts of the New Testament (fourth century), Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) and Codex Vaticanus (B), plus many other old manuscripts, do not contain them. Moreover, the writings of some church fathers reflect no knowledge of these verses. On the other hand, verses 9–20 do appear in the majority of the old manuscripts, and other church fathers do refer to them—including Justin Martyr (A.D. 155), Tatian (A.D. 170), and Irenaeus (A.D. 180)” (Thomas Constable, Notes on Mark, Sonlight.com, 336). Scholars continue to debate whether the absence of verses in a few of the earliest manuscripts should be followed or if an ending found in the vast majority of later manuscripts should govern what is in our modern translations.

Others scholars observe that the vocabulary, style and content of Mark 16:9–20 seem to be different and perhaps incongruent with the rest of the Gospel of Mark. Mark 16:9 redundantly reintroduces Mary Magdalene. Mark 16:9–14 seem to be cryptic summaries of events described in other Gospels. The Great Commission of Mark 16:15–20 reads much like a condensation of the book of Acts. Mark 16:9–20 (often referred to as the “Longer Ending”) at best seem to function as an abbreviated and rushed ending to well-crafted literary work or at worst serve as a hodgepodge conglomeration of statements borrowed from other texts pasted on the end of a masterpiece by earnest but less gifted attendants.

Some scholars attempt to solve the problem of the End of Mark, by claiming that Mark deliberately chose to end his Gospel with fearful women silently fleeing an empty tomb in Mark 16:8. Although an ending so shocking may have appeal to modern readers, it is highly unlikely that ancient readers would have understood or allowed such a “cliffhanger” at the end of one of their master stories. “The suggestion that Mark left the Gospel ‘open ended’ owes more to modern literary theory, and particularly to reader-response theory, than to the nature of ancient texts, which with very few exceptions show a dogged proclivity to state conclusions, not suggest them” (James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, 501).

If the Gospel did not originally end with Mark 16:8, then how do we account for the external evidence of the text missing in the earliest manuscripts and the internal evidence of a longer ending that does not match the style or narrative elegance of the rest of the book? “The best solution seems to be that Mark did write an ending to his Gospel but that it was lost in the early transmission of the text. The endings we now possess represent attempts by the church to supply what was obviously lacking” (Walter W. Wessel, *Mark*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 792–793).

Some skeptics would see a missing or a substituted ending as

cause for discounting the entire Gospel of Mark. The early Church did not follow such logic. “Today we know that the last twelve verses of the Gospel according to Mark (xvi. 9–20) are absent from the oldest Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian manuscripts, and that in other manuscripts asterisks or obeli mark the verses as doubtful or spurious. Eusebius and Jerome, well aware of such variation in the witnesses, discussed which form of text was to be preferred. It is noteworthy, however, that neither Father suggested that one form was canonical and the other was not. Furthermore, the perception that the canon was basically closed did not lead to a slavish fixing of the text of the canonical books. Thus, the category of ‘canonical’ appears to have been broad enough to include all variant readings (as well as variant renderings in early versions) that emerged during the course of the transmission of the New Testament documents while apostolic tradition was still a living entity, with an intermingling of written and oral forms of that tradition. Already in the second century, for example, the so-called long ending of Mark was known to Justin Martyr and to Tatian, who incorporated it into his Diatesseron. There seems to be good reason, therefore, to conclude that, though external and internal evidence is conclusive against the authenticity of the last twelve verses as coming from the same pen as the rest of the Gospel, the passage ought to be accepted as part of the canonical text of Mark” (Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, 269–270).

Mark 16:9–20 do retell much of what is shared in the other canonical Gospels and the Book of Acts. Nothing in the “Longer Ending” is heretical or spurious so as to make the Gospel of Mark like many of the later Gnostic Gospels that were rejected by the church as “non-canonical.” R.T. France identifies many of these connections in the “Longer Ending”: “Appearance to Mary of Magdala (Mark 16:9; John 20:11–17; Luke 8:2); Mary of Magdala as messenger (Mark 16:10; John 20:18); Disciples’ unbelief (Mark 16:11,13; Luke 24:11,41); Walk to Emmaus (Mark 16:12–13; Luke 24:13–25); Appearance to the Eleven (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–23); Rebuke of unbelief (Mark 16:14; John 20:24–29); Evangelistic commission (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47); Ascension (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50–51)” (R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, 668).

The disciples, as they are described in Mark 16:9–14, were very reluctant to believe in a resurrected Jesus. Only when they are rebuked by Christ and commissioned to “preach the Gospel to the whole world” are they transformed into powerful witnesses. The signs that follow the preaching (Mark 16:17–18) served to provide confirming proof that Jesus had risen from the dead and that forgiveness was to be found only in his name. The delineation of these signs was more descriptive than prescriptive. Early apostolic ministry was full of reports of the miraculous happening in tandem with the proclamation of Jesus, much beyond the control of the disciples.

The textual difficulties found at the end of Mark’s Gospel should not discourage us from faithful proclamation of Mark’s Gospel message. The presence of a missing text is yet another example of God working through limited and broken messengers. Though these disciples struggled to believe at first, the resurrected Jesus was able to proclaim the Good News to all the world, displaying his mighty power through weak and timid vessels.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 9-20 “What, then, happened to Mark’s ending? We can only guess. It is possible that it was never written because of adverse circumstances, illness, or death. Or it is possible that it was written but then either accidentally lost or deliberately removed; in that case the loss must have been at a very early stage in order to leave no trace in the manuscript and versional tradition. We simply do not know, and there seems no point in speculating. What is perhaps rather more worth speculating about is what the original ending, whether lost or never written, might have contained. On this there are two main clues to be followed. One is the pointers to future events within Mark’s existing text, in particular the double indication that the risen Jesus would meet with his disciples again in Galilee (14:28; 16:7) and the fact that the women whose role as witnesses has been so carefully set up in 15:40–41, 47; 16:1–8 have nonetheless not communicated that testimony to anyone by 16:8 (if the latter omission is to be remedied we would have to understand their fearful silence in v. 8 as only temporary, perhaps overcome by a subsequent meeting with Jesus himself and a repetition of the message, as in Mt. 28:9–10). The other clue is the Gospel of Matthew. Mark and Matthew run closely parallel throughout the passion narrative, even though Matthew has a number of independent details not found in Mark. Even his account of the empty tomb, while circumstantially more dramatic with its guard, earthquake, and stone-rolling angel, runs structurally parallel with Mark as far as 28:8, including the angel’s message to the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee. At the point where Mark’s text stops, Matthew’s resurrection appearances are about to begin, first in Jerusalem to the women and then in Galilee to the eleven disciples. It is thus a reasonable guess (it can be no more) that Mark’s original ending (planned or executed) would have followed similar lines (except for Mt. 28:11–15 concerning the guard, who are not part of Mark’s scenario), thus fulfilling the promise of 14:28 and 16:7 with an account of a Galilean rendezvous which would suitably round off the marked contrast between Galilee and Jerusalem which has run through this gospel as through Matthew’s. To suggest that Matthew’s ending was actually based on the original lost ending of Mark is perhaps to push conjecture to the limits, but that Mark at least intended something similar as the conclusion of his work is a suggestion which seems reasonably to fit the features of his gospel and its relation with Matthew” (R. T. France, 673–674).

v. 10 *mourning and weeping* “The disciples are said to be ‘mourning and weeping.’ Following his denials, Peter, ‘began to weep’ (Mark 14:72). On ‘to mourn,’ cf. Matt 9:15: ‘Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast’

(Craig A Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, Vol. 34B, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 548).

v. 16 *baptized* “This is a verse that some people believe teaches the necessity of water baptism for salvation. However, Christian baptism elsewhere in the New Testament is always defined by an outward confession of belief in Jesus Christ. This verse also regards baptism as such. The second part of the verse clearly teaches that unbelief results in condemnation (cf. 9:43–48), not belief and failure to undergo baptism” (Constable, 340).

v. 17 *signs* “Here again is a great rule of the spiritual life; signs are to be given to those who believe, not primarily in order that they may believe. This was the ceaseless battle between the Pharisees and Jesus, with the Pharisees reiterating their demands for a sign, and Jesus equally adamant that no sign would be given to unbelief (8:11–12). Incidentally, the word used for ‘sign’ here is not used by Mark of Jesus’ miracles, although it is so used by John: this may also show a later date, and certainly suggests non-Markan authorship for the longer ending” (Alan R. Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 2, TNTC, 345).

v. 18 *snakes* “Readers may know of the ‘snake handlers’ of the Appalachians, small pockets of Christians who believe that spirituality is demonstrated by handling rattlesnakes in their church services and who point to this verse as the basis for their practice. The writer of this passage, however, seems to have had in mind an incident like the one described in Acts 28:1–6, in which Paul is accidentally bitten by a creature of some sort and survives, impressing his host as a bearer of divine power” (Hurtado, 289).

v. 18 *poison* “Stories of suffering no ill effects from poison or deadly snakes begin to emerge in the second century” (Evans, 549). “If, as suggested, these verses are a sub-apostolic attempt to restore a lost ending to Mark, then we must assume that there was some known extra-biblical case of Christians drinking lethal draughts without harm; otherwise, there would have been no point in including the phenomenon here amid a list of other well attested miracles” (Cole, 346).

v. 19 *taken up* “The ascension in 16:19 combines Acts 1:9–11 with Ps 110:1, and may also recall 1 Tim 3:16 and Matt 26:64. The subsequent mission of the disciples reflects Acts 14:3 and Heb 2:3–4 and once again emphasizes the universal appeal and import of the gospel that was ‘preached everywhere.’ Thus, the longer ending of Mark presents us with a resurrection harmony from an amalgam of NT stories—some of which reflect liturgical and missionary interests” (Edwards, 507–508).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
are empowered to be his courageous witnesses.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Despite the World Wide Web and ability to make Zoom calls to virtually any country around the globe, our world can seem pretty small. As a stay-at-home mom for many years, my world often seemed to be confined to the 4 sticky walls supporting my home. Jesus commands us to go into the world and make disciples but I have a difficult time going to the bathroom interrupted, even with older teens in the house. While I don't want to diminish a mission to the nations, without a doubt the greatest mission is in our own home. Sometimes I wonder, if I were going on mission to a foreign country, how focused would I be on making each moment count for the Kingdom? Then, I compare that mindset with what's happening at home. Yikes! Why do I get so caught up in the daily to do's of the home without making each moment count with my younger believers? Why don't I ask the same pointed questions, craft the same glitter cross or share the same awe-inspiring stories from the Bible at home that I would in a far-away land? We are commanded to proclaim the Good News so that all can know Jesus. Today, start at the table. Ask your family their favorite person in the Bible and why. Share your favorite story, or better yet, one that is confusing, and open a dialogue of wonder and awe with the rest of the family. There might be a time you are called to a foreign land to share Jesus' love. What better way to be prepared than to start in your own home?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 16:9-20.

1. To whom did Jesus appear and what was their response?
2. What did Jesus tell the Eleven?
3. Where did Jesus go after He talked to the Eleven?

What Do You Think?

What do you think it means that Jesus "appeared in a different form" (v. 12)?

What Do You Do?

What would you do if Jesus appeared right now in front of you?

CORE COMPETENCY: Jesus Christ

I believe that Jesus Christ is fully God/perfectly man and died for my sins.

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

Eric Wright (Th.M. Dallas Theological Seminary). Guest Author.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org