

## Bible Study Guide: Week of 3-29-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

### Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” <sup>4</sup> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” <sup>8</sup> So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

### **When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.**

These women appeared in Mark 15 at the scene of the crucifixion of Jesus (15:41-42), as well as at his burial (15:47). There they were identified as women who followed Jesus and provided for him during his ministry. They, unlike the male disciples of Jesus who fled, stayed for the duration of his execution and even accompanied his remains to the tomb in which Jesus was buried. According to Mark, Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in rather hurried fashion in anticipation of the sabbath. Jesus died at 3:00 on a Friday afternoon; sundown that day would begin the sabbath observance for the Jewish people. Therefore, it was imperative to bury Jesus quickly prior to the sabbath, at which point no work could be done. Joseph wrapped the body in a linen cloth, but apparently did not have time or supplies to anoint the body prior to burial. Therefore, the women returned to the tomb after the sabbath in order finish the burial process.

**<sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” <sup>4</sup> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.**

As part of the burial process, Joseph rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb to seal Jesus’ body inside. It is unclear why the women go to anoint the body of Jesus without a plan for removing the stone. Perhaps they only realized while they were already in route that the stone would prove to be an obstacle. With their question “Who will roll away the stone?” the women unwittingly anticipate the divine action of God in raising Jesus and removing the stone.

**<sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”**

The “young man, dressed in a white robe” is presumably an angelic messenger. Though Mark doesn’t tell us this directly, it is strongly implied from the other Gospel accounts of the resurrection (Matthew 28:2, Luke 24:4, John 20:12), from the angelic message “do not be alarmed,” from the divine content of the message itself, from the fear of the women, and from the white robe, which Mark earlier related to a heavenly being in the Transfiguration story. Some commentators claim that the “young man” refers not to an angelic being, but to the same “young man” featured in Mark 14:51-52 in the garden of Gethsemane. This seems unlikely to me—had Mark intended a connection between these two figures, he certainly could have been clearer about this. My working assumption is that this “young man in a white robe” is an angelic messenger. Peter bears special mention here because he has been the symbolic “chief” disciple throughout the gospel and because he will play a vital role in the early church. At the same time, he warrants special mention

because he has denied Jesus three times and, thus, may believe he has removed himself from fellowship with Jesus and the other disciples. The angel's words make it clear that Peter is included in Jesus' ongoing gospel work. The angel emphasizes the promise of Jesus, saying "...just as he told you."

**<sup>8</sup>So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.**

The women's fleeing from the command of the angel is a surprise ending, especially in light of the rest of the gospel of Mark. Jesus has repeatedly commanded people not to tell about him—a command the people broke at nearly every turn. Now, when commanded to go and tell, the women do not do so. We know that the women must have eventually obeyed, otherwise there would be no resurrection story and, indeed, no gospel. Mark seems to emphasize the confusion and fear the women experienced in reaction to the incredible news of Jesus' resurrection.

**Discussion/Reflection Questions:**

- 1. Why do you think the women failed to prepare for removing the stone?**
- 2. How do you think you would have reacted to the empty tomb and the angelic announcement had you been there?**
- 3. How does this version of the Easter story impact you, especially compared to the other gospel accounts?**