

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Mark: Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God

Part IV: The Victory Of The Perfect Servant, Mark 16:1-20

B. [Handling The Dubious Ending Of Mark With Scriptural Accuracy]

(Mark 16:9-20)

I. Introduction

- A. Mark's Gospel was written by John Mark who was rebounding from having abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) due to his faithlessly mishandling some unspecified difficulty.
- B. We come to a passage where we ourselves face theological difficulty, the disputed ending of Mark's Gospel. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Mark 16:9-20) We thus trust the Lord and rely on undisputed Scripture teachings to guide us to apply what we have learned in this Gospel in facing and handling such difficulties:

II. [Handling The Dubious Ending Of Mark With Scriptural Accuracy, Mark 16:9-20.]

- A. Manuscript evidence indicates that Mark 16:9-20 was not part of Mark's original Gospel (as follows):
 1. The two oldest (fourth century A. D.) and very credible Greek uncial manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, omit these verses. (Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Com. on the Greek N. T., 1971, p. 123; U. B. S. Greek N. T., 1966, p. xiii; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 193)
 2. The vocabulary and style of Mark 16:9-20 greatly differ from the rest of the Gospel, Ibid., Metzger, p. 125.
 3. The "connection between verse 8 and verses 9-20 is so awkward that it is difficult to believe that the evangelist [Mark] intended the section to be a continuation of the Gospel," Ibid.
 4. There are other shorter endings for Mark's Gospel supplied in various manuscripts, but they lack much of the "interesting detail" of Mark 16:9-20, and it is impossible that the scribes would have replaced that longer ending, as dubious as it might seem, with less interesting readings, Ibid., p. 126.
- B. Accordingly, the abruptness with which Mark 16:8 ends with the women being fearful coupled with this other information suggests that the original ending of Mark's Gospel was lost early, that some scribe who copied the rest of the Gospel manuscript could not resist the temptation to add the Mark 16:9-20 ending, Ibid., Ryrie.
- C. Thus, we cannot base any doctrine on Mark 16:9-20 by itself, so we use that passage in ministry as follows:
 1. Most of Mark 16:9-20 shares information that is found in other parts of the New Testament. Thus, we preach and teach of those events providing we validate them with the other undisputed Scripture passages.
 2. However, there are notable theological problems at Mark 16:16a, 18a,b: (a) Christ is there said to have told His disciples to preach the Gospel to the whole creation, not to people, (b) that the signs to follow them that believe would include taking up serpents and (c) drinking poison unharmed. We thus address these problem statements by relying on other Scripture passages with undisputed texts as follows:
 - a. Matthew 28:19-20 and Luke 24:47 reveal Jesus told the disciples to evangelize people, not creation.
 - b. Though Paul accidentally took up a poisonous serpent unharmed in Acts 28:3-5, nowhere else does Scripture direct that this was to be a ritual or a sign gift for the Early Church to practice as in the case of the other sign gifts in Mark 16:17-18 (such as exorcising demons, speaking in tongues and laying on of hands to heal the sick), sign gifts mentioned elsewhere in Scripture as being practiced by the Early Church.
 - c. Nowhere else in the New Testament is there a command or even the record of an event of an Early Church believer drinking poison unharmed.
 - d. Thus, we hold that the Early Church was never directed of God to practice (1) preaching to all creation as opposed to preaching to people, (2) taking up serpents unharmed and (3) drinking poison unharmed.

Lesson: (1) *Mark 16:9-20 or the other less credible endings of Mark's Gospel are not part of Mark's original Gospel, but its true ending was lost very early in Church History.* (2) *Thus, though other parts of Mark 16:9-20 are verified by other undisputed parts of the New Testament, we hold the Mark 16:16a, 18a,b claims of preaching to all creation and taking up serpents and drinking poison unharmed were not practiced in the Early Church era.* (3) *[We also recall from other Scripture passages that the Early Church sign gifts have ceased for today.]*

Application: (1) *May we preach and teach from Mark 16:9-20 those statements that are verified in content in other undisputed New Testament passages, and (2) correct the errors of Mark 16:16a, 18a,b in line with undisputed Scriptures.* (3) *May not practice the sign gifts for today, and (4) may we especially counter the rituals of preaching to all creation, handling serpents and drinking poison unharmed as they have no validity elsewhere in Scripture.*