

MARK (PART 51)  
AS HE SAID TO YOU  
MARK 15:40-16:16  
KENTON SPRATT  
HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, COLVILLE  
A.D. APRIL 24, 2011



6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples-- and Peter-- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." 8 So 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. (Mk. 16:6-8)

## INTRODUCTION

**W**hat difference does the resurrection of Jesus make? There is a scene in the documentary film *Collision* where the atheist Christopher Hitchens discounts the importance of Jesus' resurrection. One of His arguments was that even if someone did rise from the dead, it wouldn't really matter.

"If you say that you win the argument because you were once dead and now you're alive—I will look at you slightly narrowly. If I was on the bus with you—it's odd isn't it—if you were on the bus next to someone who said, "you know I used to be a dead person but I'm alive now"...you would move towards them or away? Everybody knows what they would do."

And Hitchens is right insofar as his argument goes. First, a resurrection would not be self-interpreting – it would have no independent meaning apart from the interpretation given to the event. Second, we would move away from a person speaking like this sitting next to us on a bus—providing they were a stranger. But, in the first place God did not leave it to us to puzzle out the meaning of Jesus' resurrection on our own. And, secondly, Jesus was not a stranger to those around him—to the two Mary's and Salome, or His disciples. Hitchens is right insofar as he attacks the significance of an ahistorical instance of resurrection, but his argument is not sound in arguing against the actual facts of Jesus' resurrection.

## AS HE SAID TO YOU (v. 7)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen in an historical vacuum. He was no stranger. Jesus was known by his many close followers and apostles as well as being a very public and popular figure. His followers did not back away when He spoke about His resurrection. They didn't understand Him (9:32). But they considered this man not only to be sane and reliable, but someone of such character and significance that they willingly followed him, were willing to be taught and corrected by him, and even claimed to be willing to die for Him. His words and actions always seemed to be on target, even when they were surprising and unexpected.

But not only was Jesus known, He was first also properly introduced (Jn. 5:31-33). He didn't come on His own announcing who He was. Another came announcing who he was – a man who was recognized as a prophet in Israel named John. There were also two more private introductions that God gave with His own voice at Jesus' Baptism (1:11) and Transfiguration (9:7). These events are hard to rig.

Even harder to rig were the prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures that spoke of a coming Messiah. Mark repeatedly affirmed that Jesus' life and actions were fulfilling the Scriptures (e.g. 12:10; 14:49; 15:28). These Scriptures that they had in their possession for hundreds of years spoke of places, times, and events that identified the expected Messiah. Many of these things were outside of normal human control – the time He was placed in history (Dn. 2:44; 9:24ff.), the nationality and tribe He belonged to (Gn. 49:10), the city of His birth (Mt. 2:4-6), not to mention details of His death and how others might behave toward him (e.g. Ps. 22:16, 18).

On top of all these things are Jesus' own words—the thing which the angel draws to their attention: “He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, *as He said to you*” (v. 7) Saying these things *prior* to your death and resurrection puts a whole different spin on the event. These things didn't just happen. Jesus' resurrection was planned (8:31; 10:33, 34). It was purposeful. He had appointments in his Day-Timer for dates after his death (Mk. 14:28). And He intended to keep them.

### AS THEY TOLD YOU (MK. 16:9-14)

The records indicate that nobody found it easy to believe Jesus' resurrection. The ladies' early morning visit was not to see if Jesus might have been raised, but to anoint His body (v. 1). The question was not if the stone would be there, but how they were going to remove it (v. 2). When the revelation was made to them by the messenger, they were afraid to tell anyone (v. 8). And each time that Jesus showed Himself alive, the others didn't believe the report that those witnesses brought (v. 11, 13). When Jesus finally confronted the eleven apostles in one room, he rebuked them for their “unbelief and hardness of heart” (v. 14). Why would He do this? Does Jesus expect His disciples to believe just any wild report? Of course not. But he does expect his disciples to believe reports verifying what He was already told His disciples would happen. These reports, like the resurrection itself, did not happen in an historical vacuum. And they had all the inconvenient markings of historical authenticity—like women witnesses.

### AS THE STORY IS TOLD (MK. 16:15, 16)

When Jesus instructed the eleven to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” he did not send them out to proclaim a set of “truths” or “laws” or “beliefs” that fell from the sky. The “good news” is an announcement in the context of a story. The gospel is an announcement rooted in history and focused on Jesus, who is the “anointed one” the “Son of God”—which terms can only be understood in terms of the story. The story begins in Genesis—“in the beginning.” It is not yet finished. Its crux is, as the word itself indicates, the events surrounding the cross of Christ.

The key is to get the story. And one of the clues that you've really understood and grasped the significance of the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus is that you have experienced fear. This is the kind of fear that has you starting to look for the exit signs. At least that's the response that the three ladies had who came to anoint Jesus' body (v. 8). This kind of fear is not incompatible with joy (Mt. 28:8), but is rather the foundation of it. It is on this basis—the reality of the resurrection of Jesus—that we call on every knee to bow and every tongue to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is on this basis, that we are confident that all who oppose Him will be cut down. Nobody is safe now.