

Mark 16:1-18 The Resurrection of Jesus

16 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. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But 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. ⁷But 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.' ⁸So 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 Shorter Ending of Mark

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

The Longer Ending of Mark

9 [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

14 Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. ¹⁶The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.'

Do you believe in the resurrection?

"Charles Moule was a leading scholar of the New Testament at Cambridge University. At the end of a lecture an undergraduate once called out, "Professor, do you believe in the Resurrection?" After a pause he replied, "In my experience the size of the crater is proportionate to the force of the impact. Look at how many people follow Jesus today." (Rev Tony Morling)

That passage is from the Methodist Church "A Word in Time Bible Study" for Easter Sunday. This and the coming weeks material has been prepared by a Methodist Minister I was at college with.

On the whole I prefer to accept the shorter ending to Mark's Gospel as being authentic. There is something about "and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" being so real that having that as a penultimate verse is powerful.

The shorter ending has no resurrection appearances of Jesus and in that there can be an important message.

In the longer ending "they would not believe it" and similar phrases crop up 3 times. They "would not believe it" can help us in our life of faith. They did not believe but went on to believe.

There are times in most people's journey of faith when we can have doubts, when we can struggle to believe. We do not all believe exactly the same. We may interpret Scripture differently to another and this causes people in the church much more of a problem than, I believe, it does God. (Though there might be some reading this who would disagree.)

In moments when I find myself struggling because of intellectual doubts I take comfort that others with a greater intellectual capacity for reason and reflection have thought it through and "got it", or still believe. Faith is not about the intellect, though God gave us an intellect to use; when the intellect doubts what does life's reflective experience say? Faith is faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)