

Mark 16:1-8

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Chris. Do keep your Bibles open on that page 844. And we will flip a little bit over to chapter 16 as well, but we'll focus on chapter 9.

! And this concert was a royal gala, which meant that the Queen was there, I think Prince Philip was there, Prince Charles was there, Camilla was there, and possibly some others.

And we knew they were coming because we had all these security checks in advance. We were very aware that she was there. But it wasn't until we actually got on stage, we were all in formation, they put us into this big formation to look like we were a big mountain.

And then the curtain went up, and we were sort of singing this new piece that had been written for it. And we could just see just in the distance, off in the circle, we could just about make out that there was the Queen just there, that's Prince Philip there.

You could just about make the shapes of their heads because you'd seen them on TV. But you were just only just aware of them. And that was about as close as we got to her. We were very aware she was around, and the closest we got to her was just seeing her up there in the distance.

[1 : 26] Well, last week from Matthew's Gospel, we saw that Jesus is the resurrected King. We're doing a short series over four weeks, looking at what I'm calling Resurrection Colours.

What does each Gospel tell us about the Resurrection? And we're taking out just some of the shades that we get from different Gospels about Jesus. And in Matthew we see Jesus is a risen King.

The Bible's message is that there is a man who has not only gone into death and come back, but actually he has gone into death and come out the other end. And Matthew's telling us, if you want to understand who this man is, you need to know that he is King.

He has all authority, whether or not you realise it, whether or not you acknowledge it. This is a man who has all authority and therefore your life is about him, whether or not you realise it.

And I left you with a question, who are you living for, if not for him? But it's really important to note that this is not a King who is distant, like the Queen was that one day, that one day in my life where I saw her in real life.

[2 : 33] The King is not like our Queen in that way. Now this is a King who relates to his people, because he speaks to his people. Jesus, the risen King, is also Jesus, the risen prophet.

And that is the emphasis we're going to see in Mark's Gospel. Just as Matthew's Gospel begins with a list of kings and then ends with talking about his authority, we've got Mark's Gospel beginning talking about prophets.

Immediately at the beginning of Mark's Gospel, he quotes prophets talking about the one who is to come. And then we have a focus on Jesus' teaching ministry, to such an extent that we're not told anything about Jesus' life before he starts teaching, in Mark's Gospel.

And just as Matthew's Gospel ends talking about Jesus' authority, Mark's Gospel ends, well, actually it's quite tricky where Mark's Gospel ends. You might have seen when we read it, Chris read up until verse 8, and everything else had double square brackets around it, with a footnote saying, early manuscripts don't contain this bit.

And so, there's been debate over whether or not that should be included. And the more research people have done, the more people have looked at the many, many, many manuscripts available, it's become clear that Mark's Gospel really should end at verse 8.

[4 : 01] So, I was working at the British Library yesterday, just doing some studying, and if you were to go into their sort of treasures section, you could go and see something called the Codex Anaiticus, which is from the 4th century, and it's under glass and it's stuck on one page.

But if you were to manage to persuade somebody to show you the page that has Mark's Gospel in it, or you could just go online and look at it, because they scanned it all online, you'll see that it ends at verse 8.

Now, this doesn't mean, if this is new to you and this is worrying, it doesn't mean that the Bible's authenticity is in any way questionable. It's actually the opposite. It's precisely because we have so many manuscripts, so much data, that we can be pretty sure that Mark did end at chapter 16, verse 8.

If you disagree, that's okay, or if you want me to clarify or give more details, I can afterwards if you want. But I'm going to proceed on the basis that it ends at verse 8 of chapter 16, which means that we don't actually see the risen Jesus in Mark's Gospel.

We just hear about the risen Jesus, which is significant in itself, and we'll come to why later. But it means that the transfiguration account is what will really help us to understand more about Jesus as the risen prophet.

[5 : 21] Because that is actually the point of the transfiguration. Straight after the first time Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, he takes three friends up the mountain, and he is transfigured.

And the point of the transfiguration, or at least one of the purposes of it, is to give them a preview of what Jesus will be like after the resurrection. It's a preview of his resurrection glory.

It actually makes it to the end of verse 10. So they kept the message to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. It makes that quite ironic, because they literally just saw what it means.

So what do these two passages, in Mark chapter 9 and in chapter 16, tell us about Jesus, the risen prophet? Well, four things briefly.

First thing, he is the original word. Jesus is the original word. Now I am far from being an art expert, but one thing I have learned, just in the little I do know, is that one important thing when you're looking at a piece of art is the light.

[6 : 28] What does the artist do with the light? It's partly the genius of the Impressionists. They do really amazing things with light. And there's a painting I really enjoy in the Louvre Museum in Paris by an artist called De Vitter.

He's a Dutch artist from the 17th century. And it's the inside of a church. There are people milling about. I think there's a dog somewhere. There's a man digging a tomb to bury someone inside.

But it's actually, it's an imaginary church. But the only way you know it's imaginary is the light.

Because the light is coming in from the side of the church, not from either end of the church.

The whole point of the painting is him saying, what if we just weren't so much dictated about tradition that says churches should face east and just got on with the job?

The Bible never says to face a church east. So why are we bothering doing it? Now that's partly the point of it. But the only way you know that is the light. And we should look at where the light is coming from in this passage.

[7 : 33] The light is coming from Jesus. He is the radiant one. He is the one who is glowing. He is the one who is transfigured. Moses, who was standing right next to him, he had shone himself as well.

His face had shone. But his face was reflecting glory. Jesus is the one whose glory Moses had reflected.

He is the original word. He is the original glory. The original one they were speaking about all these years. He is the basis of all the prophecy that had come before him.

So he's the original word. He's also the ultimate message. He is the one all the prophets were promising over all those centuries.

So secondly, he's the ultimate message. Look at verse 3 of chapter 9. And his clothes became radiant, intensely white. And then he just adds this comment.

[8 : 36] As no one on earth could bleach them. And if you jump down to the bottom of the page to the footnote, which is even tinier, it says, Greek launderer, or it's literally a fuller.

So no fuller on earth or no fuller in the land could make them any whiter. That's literally what Mark is saying. Why would he add that comment? The more I thought about it, the more I'm convinced that he is deliberately just giving little echoes to other prophets who had spoken of the one who was to come.

Isaiah the prophet had said that God would make Israel's crimson sin as white as snow, as white as wool. And here, beyond death, lies one who is as dazzling white as it can possibly get. Not in racial terms, obviously. He's talking about the purity of his holiness. Here is a promise of what lies beyond death in the resurrection.

You can't get purer than what lies there. Also, the prophet Malachi, he said that when the Lord came, it would be like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap and who can abide the day of his coming. [9 : 52] And now, he stands one who, as the Lord, is as awesome in purity as you can get. And he is a man who doesn't need to be purified at all.

He is the one who can stand, he can abide the day of the Lord's coming because he is so pure and perfect. He is the one the prophet had been speaking of, both as the Lord and the man who can stand before the Lord.

Moses as well, who was standing right there next to him, supernaturally, he had spoken of a prophet who would be greater than he, one who would come and be greater.

Which leads me to a third thing we can learn. He is the final prophet. Jesus is the final prophet.

Moses had predicted a greater prophet than he who was to come.

So Moses wasn't saying, I am the greatest prophet and then somebody else comes and said, no, actually I am. Moses himself said, somebody greater than I is coming. And later on, we see another remarkable prophet, Elijah, who is also standing right there next to Jesus.

[10 : 59] And he had a remarkable ministry. But he also faced great opposition from the authorities at the time. After a great event on Mount Carmel, Queen Jezebel says, go and kill him.

And he falls into a depression. I wonder whether maybe he had suspected that he might have been the greater prophet. And he goes to the same mountain that Moses had gone up to hear those words from God.

And Elijah sees much of what Moses saw. He saw fire and earthquake and wind. And after the fire came a still, small voice or basically nothing, nothing new was said.

Elijah is told, no, you keep preaching the message that you've had the whole time. You're not getting a greater message. You are not the greater prophet. You're getting nothing.

You keep the message you've had because the greater prophet is still to come. And one day, I'll show you who he is. And here he is seeing who this greater prophet is.

[12 : 05] And if we think about the end of the Gospel of Mark, we don't see Jesus. We see the women going to hear from an angel that Jesus is risen.

And they are told, go and tell the apostles. And the last thing we see is they go off, they're full of fear, and they don't tell anything to anyone.

And you could read that in different ways. Is that possibly that actually they disobey the command because they're too scared? Or might it be, probably to fit better with what we see in the other Gospels, is that they are so in awe of what has happened and so committed to the task they've been given that they don't tell anyone on their way to tell the disciples.

They know their focus now, tell the disciples that Jesus has risen. And they are not at all distracted from the people they might see on the street. They go straight to the disciples.

Because Jesus is the final prophet and the apostles are his messengers. They are the ones who then go and spread the news. These disciples would be the ones not to add to the prophecy, but to be the final interpreters, the final communicators of this message.

[13 : 18] Which is why we have the Bible, the New Testament. The apostles recorded their teaching here in the New Testament. And so this is what the women have to do.

They have to go and get the message to them so that we can then have them have the message recorded. The message of this final prophet recorded. And here is God's voice to Peter and James and John.

Hear him. Hear this final prophet. Yes, hear Moses insofar as he is pointing to this final prophet. Yes, hear Elijah insofar as he is pointing to this final prophet, Jesus.

Jesus. And then everyone was to hear the apostles who would communicate the message. Insofar as you hear anyone preaching faithfully what the apostles passed on, you are hearing the voice of Jesus.

Mark was most likely a friend of Peter and a disciple of Peter and he heard Peter. And so through Peter he heard Christ and he recorded that for us. He is saying hear him.

[14 : 26] He is making it very clear that this is the final word. This is the final prophet. That Muhammad is not the final prophet. And it's not Joseph Smith. And it's not Charles Russell. And it's not Oprah Winfrey.

And it's not Barack Obama. It's nobody else. There is no final prophet after Jesus. God is making it absolutely clear with this great voice coming out of heaven.

Yes, you see Moses and Elijah. And Peter might think this is wonderful. Let's keep Moses and Elijah with us. Let's keep you in the tent as well. And we'll have everyone maybe come and visit. Or we can just stay here on our own. We don't quite know why he said it. And we're told he doesn't really know why he said it. But he thought this is just so wonderful that we've got Moses and Elijah here.

And the voice says, no, this is my beloved son. Hear him. And only Jesus is left. We're saying hear him. If you're hearing anything that contradicts with Jesus, you're hearing the wrong thing.

[15 : 22] Hear him. So we've seen that he is the original word. We've seen he's the ultimate message. He's the final prophet.

And then finally, he's the greatest voice. He is the greatest voice. We live in a world where we are surrounded by voices. You'll look around and you'll see adverts everywhere.

You'll switch on the TV or just go online. And whether it's on the BBC or on Netflix or anything, you will be invited to hear all kinds of different messages. You will be invited into worlds where there are different gods.

You might be invited into a world through a TV program where the god there is power or maybe money or sex or anything or maybe there's just no god and it's all hopeless and it just brings you into despair.

But here we have the real world where God is king and we are told hear him. The whole world wants to tell you don't listen to him, listen to me. And God is saying don't listen to anyone else, hear him.

[16 : 32] That is the one you should listen to. Don't believe that the world's created in the books you read or in the TV shows you watch as entertaining as they can be and as interesting as they can be and as far as they contradict what Jesus is saying and present to your world where there is no god or there is another god.

Don't hear them, hear him. You might think I can't hear him. I read this and I just can't hear him at all. Do trust that it's possible to hear him.

All kinds of people heard Jesus. A deaf man heard Jesus when he said open up to his ears. A deaf girl heard Jesus when he said honey it's time to get up.

She heard him. A dead man in a tomb had been there for days. He heard Jesus and got up when Jesus spoke. It's possible to hear him if you're listening for his voice.

So hear him. So last week I asked you who are you living for if not for him? And so consider who are you listening to? What are you listening to?

[17 : 46] If not Jesus. So that's more of what we can see from the resurrection. Here's another resurrection colour. Jesus is the risen prophet.

And we hear him as we hear the words of scripture. As the apostles handed down those words to us. And here we can hear him and come to life and share this glory ultimately in the resurrection that he promises himself to bring us to.