**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Confidence in God's Word, as It Is Written**
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: SC12-1

**2012 Shepherds' Conference (Session 01)**

I was handed today a copy of a book that in some measure came out of a message I gave to launch the conference a few years ago, I gave a now somewhat familiar message on why every self-respecting Calvinist should be a Pre-millennialist. Some of you will remember that. Well that has ended up in a book with some of my friends and faculty at the seminary and Dr. Mayhue. And the interesting part about this is, if you're going to argue against the biblical position on eschatology, we want you to actually argue against the biblical position, and not against some caricature of it from the past, so this is what you'll have to answer if you want to retain your a millennial status. You have to be able to handle what the arguments are in Christ's prophetic plan. And there are some available around here for you today. But that's the past and we're not going there again. We've solved that problem, on to other things.

I am, as you are as a pastor, moving rapidly through the years of ministry and even through the year since last Shepherds Conference. And, like you, I've preached every Sunday morning and night, for me, on different subjects and different texts and it goes very fast and very rapidly by. And then I stop to think about what am I going to do to minister to the men who come to the Shepherds Conference and because I'm surrounded by such wonderful friends and gifted guys that serve alongside me, I turn to them and uniformly I was compelled, if I want to have a future here, to speak to you on the subject that I am this morning. And so we'll have to lay it at the feet of those around me who have been with us through all the ministry for many years here at Grace Church and felt like this might be an encouragement in a way to you. And so, what I'm going to do this morning is speak on a passage that is in your Bible, but shouldn't be there. Please turn to Mark 16. So you can say that you were there when John MacArthur did an exposition of a spurious passage in Scripture.

Just a little bit of background on this, and I think if you stay with the process, you may enjoy the end. On Sunday June 5, last June 5th, the end came to an effort that began here in February of 1969. From the time that I arrived at Grace Community Church on that February 9th, in 1969, my desire was to teach through the New Testament. I had prepared to do that. I took a Greek Minor in college and then New Testament emphasis in seminary cause I really wanted to spend my ministry in the New Testament.

I wanted to go through verse by verse with a reasonable measure of depth, not taking every rabbit trail, every possible avenue away from a text, but find to at least be fair to all that a text contains. And so the years have gone by since 1969 and it was June 5th, 2011 that I finished the New Testament. In the gospels I averaged…in the gospels I averaged 5.5 verses per message and that's pretty good for me, and in the epistles 4 verses per message because they're a little more dense than narrative passages.

I suppose it needs to be said that I believed when I started what I believe now that I have held in my hand the actual living Word of God, and that every message that I have preached from it is the Word of God, as best as I could interpret it and understand it.

I suppose I could have begun the 43-year effort with a long defense of Scripture's authenticity , or Scripture's authority, or Scripture's inspiration, or Scripture's inerrancy, and accuracy, and sufficiency and while through the years I talked about those things when the Scripture talked about them, I didn't do that. I have believed that the Scripture is its own defense. I have believed that the Scripture examined and the Scripture understood will make its own case for its authority and inerrancy. I am a pre suppositionalist in that sense. God doesn't try to prove the Bible to be true, He simply declares the truth. I have never tried to prove to the congregation of Grace Church that what we are reading and what we are hearing is God's Word. I haven't needed to do that because Scripture is its own peerless advocate. Its accuracy and its truthfulness, its clarity, its power are obvious as its content accumulates. And the weight of it increases and increases and increases. And correspondingly doubt diminishes and disappears.

For those not exposed regularly, consistently to the truth and power of Scripture, some rational defenses may help them, can help them. But for those who are constantly, regularly, systematically brought into the depths of Holy Scripture, it builds its own case. And eventually what you have is concrete reinforced with rebar that you can stand on, a foundation that does not move.

So I started an exposition of the New Testament and it lasted for 43 years. I only had one objective, it wasn't homiletical, I don't think I ever spent more than 15 minutes on an outline. It wasn't practical. I don't spend a lot of time trying to think up practical ways to apply something since everybody's different. It wasn't cultural. I don't think I spent ten minutes on a sermon trying to figure out how I could make it say what I thought people might like to think it says because it fits their cultural perspectives. I never thought about relevance. I never thought about how can I move their emotions. Never thought about how can I motivate them. All I thought about was how can I explain what this means.

So if you were to characterize these years of preaching, they would be explanatory…they would be explanatory. And it shows up in the commentaries. You won't find any dead German heresies in the commentaries because I don't really care what dead Germans think, I just care what God thinks.

That's reflective of the nation of the ministry. Somebody else can take care of the dead German.

What does Scripture mean by what it says? And I believe that the Holy Spirit then moves with power where He wills and in whom He wills based upon a true understanding of Holy Scripture. Thousands of passages, thousands of sermons, for some years I preached four sermons a Sunday and then for many, many years, three sermons a Sunday, two in the morning, one at night, two different books and my struggle was always the same, it never changed. "What does this mean? What does this mean? And capturing the meaning in that text and then broadening the meaning from that text to the *analogious scriptura*, everywhere else in the Bible that reinforces this great truth. And out of the truth of the Scripture, which is alive and powerful, out of the truth of the Scripture comes strong, compelling, divine, life-changing implications. I'm far more interested in implications than application. The Holy Spirit can do the application. I want people to feel the burden of the implication. And I confess that over 43 years I found myself always caught up in the joy of this exercise, never a drudgery. Work, discipline—yes, but never anything but joy even in the midst of self-examination that threatened my sense of well-being, even in the face of fresh discovery of things that needed to be dealt with in my own heart, the joy was always there. And with that joy came an increasing passion that comes from loving God and therefore delighting in everything He has ever said. And I wanted my people to know that joy and that love and I wanted my people to get the implications of this because the implication of every truth is that it leads either to blessing or judgment. And I want for my people blessing.

So while my desire to explain the meaning of Scripture, I couldn't keep the passion out of it as I can't now, because the passion is the fire of my own heart and the passion is also the desire for the people of God to see the implications of this step into the realm of obedience and no blessing.

So, from February 1969 until June of 2011, that's how it went. I never planned the order. I didn't go from the first chapter of Matthew to the last chapter of Revelation. The order was, in all honesty, random. People have asked me, "How did you choose what book next?" And it was just…just random. I thought, "I'd like to know this book, I'd like to do this book, I'd like to do that. Did God have a part in that? Of course, behind the scenes His providence is working in all of that, but I had no particular plan. It was a matter of the impulses of the moment, the interest of the moment, and so I jumped and bounced all over the New Testament, threw in a few Old Testament books, threw in the book of Daniel which was a great exercise, book of Zechariah, marched my way through the first eleven chapters of Genesis, preached on all kinds of other things, but basically just randomly picking New Testament books.

And guess what? I realized as I was coming to the end of a Luke a few years ago, that the only thing I had left was Mark. And I thought, "These people have been ten years in Luke." And when I announced to them, "We're going to do Mark and start all over again, and go back to the thing again, the life of our Lord, they're going to be upset." Ten years of Luke, and now what's he going to do?

Another ten years in Mark? We know all this stuff. I miscalculated their response. When I told them that I was going to do Mark, there was joy all across this church…all across this church. And that joy lasted through Mark when I finished, June 5. For many preachers, Mark is where you might begin, right? Because it's a newspaper version of the life of Christ. You know, the elements and the characteristics of the book of Mark, short, to the point, very few didactic sections. It's the story and it's quick and it's fast. The most common word is immediately, immediately, immediately, immediately. And that's a great place to start, but it's where I ended. And really, in one sense, it could have died because that's the only thing I ever really planned to do was the New Testament, not thinking I'd ever finish it or that I'd stay in one church which would force me to keep moving through the New Testament. But here I was at the end.

And so, I arrived at the end of 43 years of exposition of Scripture, and where did I land? At Mark 16:9 through 20. And now after 43 years I have to tell them that something in their Bible doesn't belong there. Oops!

As Mark ends this powerful history of our Lord Jesus, he does what the other writers do, he ends at the resurrection, essentially. I mean, that's the last great event. And then, of course, Matthew, Luke and John give us some of the appearances of Christ after the resurrection, but they all sort of end up at this great monumental event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and Mark is there. In chapter 16 verses 1 to 5, there's the testimony of the empty tomb. That's testimony that Jesus is alive. And then in verses 5 through 7, there's the testimony of the angels who affirm that He's alive. And then in verse 8 there is an eyewitness testimony from the women going off to the Apostles. So you have Mark ending with this eyewitness account, which again sort of fits his newspaper approach to everything. You have testimony of an empty tomb, testimony of heavenly angels, testimony of eyewitnesses, and it stops. And verse 8 ends, "They went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.

That is a passive form of a verb that is the verb *phobeo* that is used, for example, in Homer to speak of fleeing, or being put to flight. And maybe we ought to handle it that way so that we don't think it means they were scared. There was a reason why they fled and we know the reason because the rest of the writers tell us, they fled to the disciples to tell them Jesus was alive.

So Mark ends so abruptly, trembling, astonishment, awe…I mean, look at the verbs in verse 8, trembling, astonishment, flight, or fear, if you will, the evidence has overwhelmed them. They're stunned…they're stunned into silence and so is Mark and he drops his quill.

Now I've written a few books through the years and as a writer, I would probably get a note back from a publisher if I had sent that kind of an ending, "This is too abrupt, you need more here." And so, guess what? We get more. There it is with a little bracket, do you see it in verse 9 all the way down to verse 20? And then you even get a bonus at the bottom, you get a few more suggestions.

So here I am after 43 years of teaching the Word of God, and we end up in a very strange and confusing place. Is there after the end of Mark's gospel a section in my Bible that doesn't belong in it? And how many other sections are like that? Was my last message to be from a text that isn't supposed to be here? And does this, after 43 years of careful learning from the precious truths of the New Testament, all of a sudden undermine our confidence in Scripture. What am I going to tell the congregation? Does this pose at the very end for me the question that some thought I should have answered at the very beginning? What is the question that it poses? Is my Bible accurate? That's the question. Is my Bible accurate? Is the Bible you hold in your hand trustworthy? And what about this strange ending? Why if it doesn't belong here is it here?

The question of confidence in Scripture then comes right to the surface here, doesn't it? Right to the surface. I assumed it for decades. My people assumed it. They loved the Word of God; they never questioned its veracity until the end of 43 years. I don't think I can remember in 43 years anybody ever coming to me and saying, "I'm not sure the Bible's true. I have some questions about the authenticity or the manuscripts that are the basis of our text. I don't think I've ever had that kind of conversation. And the reason is because every text has carried in itself the burden of authenticity and carried it well. Does this change anything? How do you handle this kind of text? And is the Bible, in fact, true?

Well all those questions led me to do a postscript message on this passage which after all the messages in the 43 years were finished, I added as an addendum on a Sunday night, having finished the section on the resurrection through verse 8 Sunday morning, I said, "Come back tonight and I'll explain this final postscript.

And what I found and what our people found, and I think this is why they wanted me to maybe encourage you with this, is that this section at the end provides a rich opportunity for Bible students to be strengthened in their confidence in the Bible they hold in their hands being the original Word of God. It does the opposite of what you might think it does. This section gives the Bible reader the opportunity to go behind and below the cherished English translation—first of all, into the history of ancient texts on which all modern texts are based. I'm going to be a little bit like a professor now for a while, but it's necessary. Stay with me.

Beneath the surface of your cherished Bible is a long history of careful preservation of the original text. We don't have the first autographs, the actual ones written by the first and only authors of Scripture, we don't have those. But we have carefully preserved copies of those going all the way back to the time of Origens. This particular text of Scripture then gives us the opportunity to take a look at the careful way in which the Word of God has been preserved so that what you read in your Bible is a trustworthy and accurate translation of the original—in the case of the New Testament—preserved over two thousand years. Now this is the first element in understanding God's

holy revelation. This is the first element. I don't live in this world, but thankfully there are people who have and they have been our benefactors. They live in the world of manuscripts.

The first question to ask is what did God actually write? What did the Holy Spirit actually inspire? Then I come along at some time later, after the manuscript people and the translator people, I take the text that's been given to me and explain what it means. But all translations of Scripture in languages are based on the same ancient sources discovered and studied for their accuracy by very careful scholars through the centuries. And I can say to you that the Bible you hold in your hands is a translation from the most accurate of these manuscripts. It is trustworthy. Thousands of people through the centuries, and even into the modern times, pour over these elements of manuscript so that what we have has vast affirmation. In fact, I would say there is massive evidence that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the Scripture but preserved it in its purity through all history. Ancient copyists knew they were writing down, copying the very words of God. And since the printing press doesn't show up till 1440, you've got hand copies of Scripture being made again and again for centuries and centuries. There's some wonderful stories about scribes who would write one letter and take a bath, then write another letter, take a bath, write another letter because of the sense that they were handling the Holy Word of God, fearful of making a mistake.

Because of the uniqueness of Scripture, because of the importance of Scripture, because of the necessity of Scripture, it has been copied and translated far more than any other literature. For example, all manuscripts in Greek and other ancient translations bring the total number of New Testament manuscripts to 25,000. There are twenty-five thousand ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. Such an abundance preserved by the Holy Spirit through faithful men in the church makes it possible to reconstruct the original books with virtually complete accuracy. Nothing in ancient literature even comes close to this, to the availability of manuscripts and translations. Nothing in ancient literature even gets near this in terms of demonstrating uniform consistency of translation across centuries.

There are about five thousand six hundred Greek manuscripts containing some or all of the New Testament, and they begin in the second century. That's when they begin. That's very early. You have papyrus 52 which has parts of John from the year 100 to 150. You have the Bodmer Papyri which is John and Luke from 175 to 225. And then you have the Chester Beatty Papyri, some of you are familiar with that, the gospels and Acts in the 200's. You go way back, right up against when they were written in that first century that any manuscript survived from that era is remarkable because it was a time of intense persecution of Christians and destruction of Scripture. So we're grateful that things survived because believers and their Scriptures were being destroyed.

When you have the Council of Nicea in 325 and Christianity becomes established as the religion of the Roman Empire, the persecution ends and starting then you have the proliferation of manuscripts. They all survived because no one is banning them or destroying them. The earliest and most

important of the biblical texts that have been discovered would be what's called Codex Sinaiticus for where it was discovered on Mount Sinai. This would be about 350 and it is the whole New Testament. About 325 Codex Vaticanus, that is both the New Testament and the Old Testament, that's very ancient manuscript. And by the way, both of them end Mark at verse 8, both of them.

Let me just kind of expand your knowledge a little more on this. There are eight-thousand copies of Jerome's Vulgate, Bible translation from 382 to about 405, a Vulgate means Common in Latin. It was a common translation. It was the common translation of the Roman Catholic Church for a long time. So you have eight-thousand copies going back to the fourth century.

There are three hundred and fifty-plus copies of the Syriac Bible. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic and it would have been very close to the language that Jesus spoke. It was spoken in places…modern places would be identified as Syria and Turkey and Iraq. There are 350 copies that go back to the 200's, very ancient manuscripts. And when you compare all of these manuscripts, they're all saying exactly the same thing. The early church fathers, and I find this fascinating, the early church fathers below 325 called the Pre-Nicene fathers, the Anti-Nicene fathers, those fathers who were doing so much writing have so much Scripture in their writings that there are 32 thousand existing references and quotes from the New Testament among the Anti-Nicene fathers before 325. In fact, there are so many quotes, 32 thousand of them, that you can virtually put the entire New Testament together from the quotes of the fathers and it matches perfectly all other manuscript sources.

The writings of the early church fathers also confirmed the accuracy of the gospels. There are over 19 thousand quotations of just the gospels in their writings, and they read the gospel text the very same way you read them in your Bible today. All this provides an abundant evidence for the original text of Scripture being preserved and protected as it was passed down. And we wouldn't question that because why would the Holy Spirit go to the trouble of inspiring it and then not providentially protect it? There's no form of ancient literature which even comes close. Second to the New Testament's 25 thousand manuscripts would be Homer's Iliad. That would be second in a number of manuscripts and there are 643 of them. Homer's Iliad was written in the eighth century B.C., the oldest manuscript we have is in the thirteenth century A.D., two thousand years later. We don't have anything between the thirteenth century and the eighth century B.C. of Homer's Iliad. But the New Testament goes back to the second century, butts up against the century in which it was written. Caesar's Gaelic Wars has ten extant manuscripts; the oldest is a thousand years after the original in first century B.C. Herodotus History of The Persian Kings, fifth century B.C., only eight manuscripts remain and the earliest is thirteen hundred years after the original. We don't know what happened from the original to the manuscript 1300 years later.

Tecites History of the Peloponessian War, eight manuscripts and the earliest again is thirteen hundred years later. And as I said, in case of Homer's Iliad with the most manuscripts, two thousand years after they were written. And look at the Bible; we have so many accurate, consistent

manuscripts that we know without hesitation that what we hold in our hands is an English translation of the original with no loss. No less a scholar than A.T. Robertson, said this, “The vast array of manuscripts has enabled textual scholars to accurately reconstruct the original text with more than 99.9 percent accuracy. I don’t know about you, but I’m glad for that.

There are variations in ancient manuscripts because they were all hand-written. There were errors here and there, the good news is, we know where they are because of the comparative manuscript study. Errors come from errors, or inadvertent omissions, or once in a while an attempted clarification. They are minor, they are inconsequential, they are known and where they appear you will usually find in a modern translation an alternate reading in the margin because we know they’re there and we know there’s an alternate reading and the scholars tell us the most likely accurate reading is, of course, the one included in the text and the alternate one in the margin. And I say that because I want you to know that never in the history of modern Bible scholarship has anybody tried to hide the variance. We don’t hide those cause it’s better to know what they are and you can look at them and see that they’re not formidable. And in most all cases, the better variant is the one included in the text. But they’re little things that came in.

I remember years ago studying one of these decisions that had to be made. There was a manuscript that had the word, well it was on the text of, “It’s easier for a rich man…for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.” And that’s a troublesome thing if you’re a scribe and you’re writing this down and you’re saying, “What do you mean it’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, it’s impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,” and then you look at your Greek language and you say, “Well wait a minute, the word for camel is *kamelos* and the word for cord is *bamelos* and the difference between a *kappa* and a *beta* is just a little line at the top and a little line at the bottom. Maybe the scribes somehow messed up and left off that little mark, maybe his pen skipped and it should be *bamalos*(??) and you could say it’s easier for a thread or a cord to go through the eye of a needle, than a rich man enter into heaven.

So if you’re the New Testament manuscript scholar and you’ve got one that says *kamelos* and one that says *bamalos*, which is the right one? Well the right one is the more difficult one because people difficult things and make them easy, they don’t take easy things and make them difficult. So there is a simple principle in the field of lower criticism to let you know how judgments are made with regard to Scripture. And, of course, camel is the right answer because it is impossible and it says in the text that it’s impossible except with God and with Him all things are…what?...possible. So that’s the way they would work.

Now why am I doing all this? Because there here at the end of Mark is this long textual variant that we know doesn’t appear in the original autograph written by Mark, it is in brackets, we know it’s not there, it’s uniformly agreed that it is not…it does not belong there. It is followed by another short variant in italics in my Bible at the bottom of the page.

Why is it here? Well it's here for the obvious reason that this just seems too abrupt—it seems too abrupt. What drove the addition is the very, very brief almost shocking, stunning end of Mark's carefully crafted history of the Lord Jesus Christ. The language is frankly dramatic, very dramatic, trembling, astonishment, speechlessness, fear, or awe. The women are in some kind of a state of terrified bewilderment, gripped by the wondrous reality of the resurrection. They know He's alive, they were there, the tomb is empty, the angels declared it. They are speechless and frankly so is Mark.

I think at this point I need to say it's fitting that the end is so dramatic and so powerful that neither the women could speak, nor could Mark write. And by the way, what needed to be said anyway, the evidence was in…the evidence was in, point proven. Jesus is who Mark said He was when He started. Mark 1:1, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," this proves it, case closed.

Now some have suggested, this is where reading commentators gets to be kind of novel, because people are trying to suggest why something isn't there. And you'll find these humorous. Let me give you…this is the range of commentaries.

Some have suggested that Mark would have interacted with Luke since both were in Rome together at the same time and Luke's gospel already penned before Mark's had been very extensive in laying out post-resurrection history, about the appearances and the ascension and the Great Commission, and because Luke did all of that, Mark decided not to.

Really. Do you know what he was thinking? Anybody here know what Mark was thinking? Absolutely not. You have no idea what he was thinking.

Others suggest, and they can go on and on with this, that Peter was Mark's source and that's very likely true from the testimony of Papious(??) So Mark ended because Peter was no longer available because he was executed. And once Peter was executed, Mark had nothing else to say.

Here's another one. Matthew and Luke, and Luke with the book of Acts, already wrote all about the post-resurrection detail so Mark didn't need to and like John who omitted all the pre-baptism history of Jesus, Mark eliminates all the post-resurrection history of Jesus.

Or you could take another approach. Mark started not at the beginning, he skipped the whole birth narrative so it's kind of like him to be brief and skip a whole lot at the front and maybe skip a whole lot at the back. And this is maybe what he was thinking.

Or, Mark likes to use a few words and so this was enough words and he decided to stop. Some say Mark…Mark intended to leave an open ending, a sort of rhetorical ending so that the reader would

write the end of the story.

Here's my favorite. There's a lost ending.

Look, there are people who would go on for three and four pages on a lost ending. If it's lost, may I ask a simple question? Why are you writing about it? You're writing about a lost ending? How do you…if you don't know there was an ending then how do you know it's lost? And if it's lost? Why speculate. All of that in one sense to simply say, look, that's all speculation. We don't know anything about his motives, we don't know anything about his circumstances, we don't know anything about what we don't know anything about like a lost ending. All we've got is Mark and his words. That's all we have. And what it says is, verse 8, "They went out , they fled from the tomb, why? Because they were trembling, they were astonished, they were silent and they literally fled in this bewildered amazement, trembling, *tramos* the word trauma, astonishment, *ekstasis*, a kind of out-of-body experience, that kind of ecstasy and effabunte(??) the idea of this being put to flight out of shear rapturous bewilderment. That's how it ends. And he stops. It's abrupt, it's shocking, but you wouldn't say it's incomplete and you wouldn't say it's inadequate.

But apparently people in the early church thought it was. Somewhere along the line they started piling up optional endings. If you go down to the bottom of the page in your Bible, you'll see a little ending down there, maybe identify the brackets. This has been universally rejected as having no connection to Mark.

Then you have the long ending from verses 9 through verse 20. This has been included in some translations, King James translations and those that didn't have the benefit of the later discoveries of manuscripts and they're still based on the textus receptus. This has been considered as legitimate but not, as I said, based on the oldest manuscripts and now in all the modern translations, it is put in brackets to indicate it was not a part of the original. It wasn't a part of the original.

Let me help you understand. Our translation is based on ancient Greek manuscripts. The originals, the autographs, the original autographs themselves do not exist, the very early copies do. When you get to those early copies, this isn't there…this isn't there. It doesn't appear in the oldest manuscripts, Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus, other of the oldest do not have it. Fourth century, Eusibius and Jerome wrote that almost Greek manuscripts, almost all in the fourth century ended with verse 8. Second century, Justin Martyr and Tatian, however, show knowledge of other endings. And even Irenaeus shows knowledge of other endings starting to float around. Irenaeus quotes 16:19 which is in this spurious section.

So this ending came into existence very early, although there was anything but uniform acceptance of it, it starts to show up. In fact, several such endings start to show up as people try to help Mark a little bit with his abrupt ending. There are medieval manuscripts that included it and such were the

manuscripts from the medieval period used by English translators before earlier manuscripts were found and that's why you find it in some of the translations in English and other languages.

Now, let's look at it in its own self. There's enough external evidence to exclude it, I've given you some of that. But what about internal evidence, what about what it says? There's just a number of things that we could call to your attention, I don't want to beg the issue here but I think it is helpful to us. The transition is awkward and strange, verse 9, "Now after He had risen early in the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene."

"Now" can basically necessitates continuity with the proceeding verse. However, what follows in verse 9 doesn't continue the story of verse 8. Verse 8, the women went out, fled from the tomb, trembling, astonishment grips them. They said nothing. They were afraid. Now after He…who's He? You have a pronoun without an antecedent in the prior section. The masculine pronoun in verse 9 expects he as its antecedent but the subject of verse 8 is the women. It is a very awkward transition. And why would Mark then say He first appeared to Mary Magdalene from whom He had cast out seven demons. He here is introducing us to Mary Magdalene and that's kind of strange because she has already appeared three times in the story…three times, chapter 15 verse 40 and 47, chapter 16 verse 1. We really don't need an introduction to her.

Furthermore, the angels spoke to Jesus back in…spoke to Peter rather of Jesus appearing in verse 7, it says, in Galilee, yet the appearances described in 9 to 20 are all in Jerusalem. Verses 9 to 20 have vocabulary not used anywhere else by Mark. There are at least 18 terms used here that never appear in Mark's gospel. The structure of this added section is different from Mark's normal way. The term, the title, "Lord Jesus" appears here but nowhere else in Mark. References made to Peter in verse 7, going to Galilee and seeing Jesus, Peter is the source of Mark's history but there's nothing about Peter in the whole ending. The idea of not believing which is repeated three times in that section, never appears anywhere else in Mark. And the subject of signs with snakes and poison and all of that, is nowhere in any gospel, not in any gospel. Where this ending came from, we don't know. ..we don't know. Except for this, verse 9 is a summary of Luke 8:1 to 3. Verse 10 is borrowed from John 20 verse 18. Verse 12 comes from Luke 24, verse 13 from Luke 25, verse 14 from Luke 24, verse 15 from Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8, verse 16 from John 20-23 and verses 17 and 18 is kind of a strange combination of some of the promises of miraculous power our Lord made to the disciples in Matthew 10, Mark 6, Luke 10, and then some of the phenomenon had occurred in the book of Acts and in the letter of Paul we call 1 Corinthians.

So this is obviously some kind of a summary package put together to bring an ending that made more sense to the gospel of Mark. What is the solution to this? Why does Mark end where he ends?

Can I help you with that? Let's go back to chapter 1. Chapter 1, Jesus going along by the sea, verse 16, saw Simon and Andrew. You know the story. And He gathers them around Him. They went in to

Capernaum, verse 21, “Immediately on the Sabbath. He entered the synagogue and began to teach.” What does verse 22 say? They were—what?—amazed, amazed at His teaching. Verse 25, Jesus rebukes a demon. Says, “Be quiet, come out of him,” throwing him into convulsions. The unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, came out of him, verse 27 says—what?—they were all amazed. Chapter 2, you know the story, the healing of the paralytic, Jesus forgives his sins, it says in verse 11, “Pick up your pallet, your bed, and go home. He got up immediately, picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone so that they were all—what?—amazed. They were glorifying God saying, “We’ve never seen anything like this before.

In chapter 4, Jesus is in a storm, verse 37, there’s a fierce gale, waves are breaking up over the boat. The boat was filling up with water. Jesus was so weary, He was in the stern asleep. They woke Him and said, “Teacher, do You not care that we’re perishing?” He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still,” the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. “And He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? How is it that you have faith?’ They became very much afraid. Said to one another, ‘Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’”

In chapter 5 verse 14, the story of the demoniac, the people see this amazing healing and in verse 15 they came to Jesus and observed a man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed, you know, he came running out of the tombs naked. Now he’s sitting down, clothed, delivered from his demon, or demons that filled up a whole herd of pigs. In his right mind, the man who had the legion, and they became frightened,”…amazement, fear, awe.

Chapter 5 and verse 33, you know this wonderful story of the woman who touched His garment, the woman, verse 33, “Fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.” At the end of the chapter, He takes the hand of the little girl, you remember, and says, “*Talitha kum”* which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up.” This was the girl who had died, daughter of an important man. “Immediately the girl got up, began to walk, she was 12 years old and immediately they were completely astounded.”

Chapter 6, another time on the water, this time He walks on the water, 6:51, “He got into the boat with them, the wind stopped and they were utterly astonished.” Chapter 9 at the transfiguration of Jesus, verse 6 says, “They became terrified.”

Chapter 9 and verse 15, the large crowd, scribes arguing with Him and when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running to greet Him. Are you starting to get a picture here?

Chapter 9 verse 32, when Jesus was teaching that the Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, they will kill Him and when He’s been killed, He will rise three days later. They didn’t understand this statement and they were afraid to ask Him. Fear and awe and amazement.

Chapter 10 verse 24, “The disciples were amazed at His words.” Chapter 10 verse 32, “They were on the road going to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking on ahead of them. And they were amazed and those who followed were fearful. Chapter 11 verse 18, “The chief priests and the scribes heard this and began seeking how to destroy Him. They were afraid of Him for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching. And it’s mounting, chapter 12 verse 17, when He said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s, they were amazed at Him.”

And one of the most amazing things of all was His encounter with Pilate, chapter 15. Pilate, verse 4, questioning Him, Jesus makes no further answer. Pilate was amazed.

And then you come to chapter 16, the women arrive at the tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, they come and in verse 4, “Looking up they saw the stone had been rolled away although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe and they were amazed.”

In ten of those passages the same verb was used, *phobeo*, they were amazed. In five of them, a cognate of that verb was used and elsewhere synonyms were used. And then you come to 16:8 and they went out and fled, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they were silent and they were afraid.

I can’t think of a better ending, can you? The amazing Jesus. It ends as it began, with amazement over the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you stop where you should stop in Mark, you step back in awe of the amazing Jesus. Every lesson, every miracle, every stunning answer that He gave, every insight, every righteous word, every righteous act fill you with stunning amazement. Amazing, you should be speechless, like Mark, like the woman at the amazing Jesus.

And I think that’s how it was for us when we ended Mark. And it didn’t take long for the people to say to me, “Okay, now what? Now what?” We’ve been studying Jesus for 43 years, historically in the gospels, 25 years in the gospels, four of them, theologically in the epistles and eschatologically in Revelation. There’s no greater subject. What are we going to do? You want to go back? People said to me and said, “Let’s do John…let’s do John.” John? We did John. No, let’s do John, please do John. They can’t get enough of the amazing Jesus.

If there’s anything missing in the preaching of this modern church today, it is Jesus Christ. There are too many little, corky, novel, homiletical talks about how to fix your life and elevate your comfort zone. The great massive hole in the church is the vacuum of the dominating presence of Jesus Christ. Paul says, “I’m determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified.” If you preach the gospels, you have the history of Christ. If you preach the epistles of the New Testament, you have the theology concerning Christ. If you preach the revelation, you have the eschatological presentation of

Christ. But it's always Christ and the people said, "We don't want to leave Christ. We don't want to take our eyes off Christ.

So what are we going to do? So I said, "Okay, this is what we're going to do. There's one place we haven't looked for Christ and that's the Old Testament. So, let's go to the Old Testament and find Him prophetically."

Now I said, "My grandkids play a game called Where's Waldo, you know Where's Waldo? You try to find Waldo." You can't find him if you don't know what he looks like. But if you know what he looks like, you can find him. And after 43 years, we know what Jesus looks like, so we can find Him in the Old Testament.

Now that's the way you have to go. That's the way you have to go because if all you've got is the Old Testament without the New, the veil, right?, the veil's over your face. You can read Moses and you can read the Old Testament, the veil doesn't go away until Christ appears. But now that we know what He looks like, wow, we can find Him everywhere He is in the Old Testament, then we'll know Him historically, theologically, eschatologically and prophetically. And He starts appearing, by the way, very early in the Old Testament, in Genesis 1 because He's the Creator.

So when you have lived for 43 years and focused almost exclusively, of course, on the New Testament and you have been swept up in the glory of Christ, you can't pick another subject than Christ. So we're going to go through the Old Testament, and I did three messages, I'll do another one this Sunday, to kind of build the bridge back to the Old Testament and then for the next chapter of my life, as long as the Lord gives me, we're just going to find Christ everywhere He appears in the Old Testament and we're excited about it. The Lord Jesus said, "The Old Testament revealed Him," on the road to Emmaus, right? Beginning at Moses, the prophets, and all the holy writings, He spoke of the things concerning Himself. The disciples and Apostles believed fully in Him, His death and resurrection, only when they understood the Old Testament. The Apostles and prophets who went out in the first generation to preach the gospel, based all their gospel preaching on the Old Testament, read the book of Acts, it's all based on the Old Testament, it's the only Bible they ever had. And the writers of the New Testament even based their writings on the Old Testament. So we're ready not to leave the glory of Christ but swept up in amazement over Jesus, we're going to keep looking at Him as long as the Lord allows us to do that.

Now having made that emphasis this morning, tonight I want to talk about, and this is going to be a two-parter tonight and Friday night, but I want to talk about the importance of the Holy Spirit in our worship. And it will be a two-parter. You know, in the very…in the very middle of every sermon I preached in my first years here, you will hear the same statement made, right in the very exact middle of every sermon I preached, you'll hear the same statement. Please turn your tape to side two. So, tonight's side one and Friday night, side two. Let's pray.

It’s just so enjoyable, so exhilarating to just take Your Word and look at it from so many angles and perspectives and to be enriched and blessed and encouraged and instructed and enlightened by its powerful truth. We thank You, Lord, for giving it to us, preserving it, protecting it. We thank You that the Word based on external evidence and internal evidence holds its own, establishes its own authenticity, inerrancy and inspiration. Yes we have in our hands the Word of God, and after 43 years of doing all of this, this book has proven to me every day of my life to be Your Word and we see it as such, and we love it and embrace it and proclaim it as such. Strengthen us through these days and may these days make a difference in our lives and our ministry’s for Your glory, we pray in Christ’s name. Amen. (Applause)

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