

Exegetical Notes, Mark 16:1-6

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

Mark 16:1-6

Verse 1:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

- Jesus' body had been placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea near the end of Friday, the day he was crucified. As the Sabbath began on Friday at sunset, there had not been time to prepare his body properly for burial according to the Jewish customs of the times. These women, followers of Jesus, purchased the necessary spices to properly wash and anoint Jesus' body. Their intention was to take care of this necessity as soon after the Sabbath as possible..
- The women involved in this plan were: Mary Magdalene, see Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2; Jesus had freed her from slavery to seven demons. Mary the mother of James, see Mark 15:47; her son was James called "the Lesser" by the Church and sometimes called Joseph in the Bible. Salome, see Matthew 27:56; she is believed to be the wife of Zebedee, the mother of the disciples James, known as "the greater" by the Church, and John. They were among the women who traveled with Jesus' disciples.

Verses 2-3

Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

- As the women approached the tomb, they remembered the great obstacle. Joseph had sealed Jesus' tomb with a huge stone. The stone would be too heavy for the women to move alone.

- They had probably not gone to the tomb on the Sabbath. So they would not have known about the guards that the Jewish leaders had placed there nor about the seal on the stone.
- Given these obstacles, there was no possible way for the women to enter Jesus' tomb. Not even for the purpose of preparing his body for burial.

Verse 4

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

- To their surprise, the women discovered that the obstacle had been removed. The grave was already open when they arrived.

Verse 5

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

- The three women approached the tomb and discovered that they were not alone. What they took to be a "young man," identified by Matthew as an angel, was waiting for them, most likely just inside the door of the tomb and to the right side. For a fuller description of the creature see Matthew 28:2 and Luke 24:4.
- The presence of this unexpected person frightened the three women.

Verse 6

"Don't be alarmed," he said, "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."

- The angel's greeting begins with the words, "Do not be afraid." Fear is always the reaction to angelic visitors, and their first words always reassure those to whom they are sent that they need not be afraid.
- The angel recognizes that the women are seeking Jesus who was crucified. He tells them that Jesus has risen from the dead and invites them to explore the empty tomb. The fact that Jesus' body is not in the tomb confirms the resurrection, for the tomb was sealed shut and guarded. There was no other acceptable explanation.

- The simply stated fact that Christ has risen is the foundational fact upon which Christianity stands.

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