

Gospel of Mark 27 – Chapter 15, verse 42 – Chapter 16, end:-

A look at Joseph of Arimathea and the the final Chapter in the Gospel of Mark. Closing with the unanswered question - “How did the Gospel of Mark originally end?”

Chapter 15, verses 42 – 46:-

We know nothing about Joseph of Arimathea apart from these few verses. The fact that “*he was looking for the Kingdom of God*” may not imply that he subsequently became a Christian. It does mean that he was expecting the coming of the Messiah and, if he was a strict Pharisee then he would not want a dead body to left unburied after sunset in strict accordance with the Law. See Deuteronomy chapter 21, verse 23. The Greek phrase translated “*prominent*” or “*respected*” member of the council would have meant someone “*of a good social position*”. It was popularly used to mean “*rich*” and Mark most likely uses it to link with Isaiah chapter 53, verse 9.

Joseph “*took courage*” i.e. ‘screwed up his courage’ and made his request for “*the corpse of Jesus*”. The word ‘corpse’ is important because it means that Mark (and the Early Church) accepted the reality of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a lifeless body which was laid in a rich man’s tomb.

The Gospel writers refer to the tomb (sepulchre is a more descriptive word) as being unused. The stone which was rolled before the door was probably a flat, circular slab which rolled in a channel carved out of the rock for that purpose.

Verse 47:-

Is needed as a link with what follows in chapter 16. at least two of the women were onlookers at the burial and could recognise the place for their return in the early morning of the day after the Sabbath.

Chapter 16, verse 1:-

The Jewish Sabbath ends at sundown. It appears that the three women mentioned in chapter 15, verse 40 went to one of the shops as it opened after the Sabbath and purchased the “*sweet spices*”. The Greek word describes perfumed oil for anointing the body of the Lord Jesus. These three women had been witnesses of the crucifixion – chapter 15, verse 40.

Mary Magdalene is only referred to in the Passion Narratives and in Luke chapter 8, verse 2 where she is noted as being healed of demon possession. After the crucifixion she was present at the tomb with Peter and John and meets with the risen Lord Jesus. See the Gospel of John, chapter 20, verses 1 – 18.

Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph – see also Mark chapter 15, verses 40 and 47. Most likely she is also referred to as “*the other Mary*” in Matthew chapter 28, verse 1.

Salome is possibly to be identified with “*the mother of the sons of Zebedee*” in Matthew chapter 27, verse 56. The Gospel of John refers to “*his (the Lord’s) mother and his mother’s sister*” John chapter 19, verse 25. If this is the same woman then she was sister of the mother of the Lord Jesus and James and John were his cousins.

Remember that the only disciple mentioned as being present at the crucifixion was the apostle John. The rest seem to have been in hiding – at least keeping out of sight. It was the women who stayed with him to the end and who were the first witnesses of the resurrection.

Chapter 16, verse 8:-

This is the end of the ancient text of the Gospel of Mark. Note that both Matthew -chapter 28, verses 1 – 8 and Luke chapter 24, verses 1 – 10 follow the outline of these verses of Mark. There are still a number of theories as to what the ending is or should be! Was the final page lost or torn? Was it written on a scroll and the ending somehow destroyed? Or did Mark deliberately end it at verse 8 leaving the listener / reader to ask the question “but what happened next?”. “If there were no appearances after this account why all the excitement?”.

If the ending was unknown to both Matthew and Luke then it had disappeared within a few years of Mark writing.

A good subject for discussion!!