

Hope in the Midst of Despair

Key Verse: *“He saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.”*
—Mark 16:6

Selected Scripture:
Mark 16:1-8, 12-15

TODAY’S LESSON EXAM-

ines Mark’s account of Jesus’ death on the cross and the reaction of some of Jesus’ followers afterward. Some women were watching from a distance—Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and of Joses), Salome, and others. They and many other Galilean women, who were his followers, had ministered to him when he was up in Galilee, and had come with him to Jerusalem. This all

happened the day before the Sabbath. Late that afternoon Joseph from Arimathea, an honored member of the Sanhedrin who personally was eagerly expecting the arrival of God’s kingdom, gathered his courage and came in boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. Pilate couldn’t believe that Jesus was already dead so he called for the Roman officer in charge and asked him. The officer confirmed the fact, and Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. Joseph brought a long sheet of linen cloth and, taking Jesus’ body down from the cross, wound it in the cloth and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn out of a rock and rolled a stone in front of the entrance.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were watching as Jesus was laid away.—Mark 15:40-47

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. On their way to the tomb, the women knew that the stone was very large and asked each other, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (chap. 16:3) When they looked, with great surprise, the stone had already been rolled away! Entering into the sepulchre they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe and he said to them, "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid."—vss. 6-8

Scholars agree that Mark's closing words of chapter sixteen, from verse sixteen to the end, are best expressed by Matthew 28:16-20. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Although Jesus' death appeared to his followers to be a time of great despair, his being raised from the dead, and their subsequent understanding of the necessity of both his death and resurrection, turned their despair to great joy. They soon rejoiced in the words, "Now Christ has been raised from the dead."—I Cor. 15:20, *New American Standard Version* ■