



Alive

Jesus's empty tomb attests to His resurrection.

MARK 16:1-14

When you return an unwanted item or defective merchandise to a store, what is often the first thing you are asked? Most of the time it is, “Do you have a receipt?” You can explain that you bought the item at that store, and the managers may extend you courtesy, but the proof of purchase is the surest way to get them to believe you made the purchase from their store.

- Have you ever had trouble returning an item without the receipt? Why do store employees want to see a proof of purchase?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

MARK 16:1-20


Jesus entered a world with varying beliefs of what awaited people in the afterlife. The Pharisees, one of the two main religious parties in Judaism, believed in the resurrection of the body, last judgment, and rewards and punishment. The other main religious party, the Sadducees, denied the resurrection and had no developed concept of what happens after death. The Pharisees believed resurrection was possible and the Sadducees did not.

Old Testament Jews believed that the departed were gathered in Sheol, the place of the dead. They did not have a fully developed sense of what happened after death, though there are instances where the afterlife is affirmed in the Old Testament (see Job 13:15; Pss. 16:10-11; 49:15; 73:24-26). Greeks believed that the soul was immortal, and all people would go to the same place, Hades, which was a dreary place without future reward or punishment.

In that world of confusing, and sometimes opposing, ideologies of life after death, Jesus delivered proof of life after death. At sunrise on Sunday, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome took spices to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. On the way, they discussed who would roll away the stone from the tomb's entrance. As they got close, they realized the stone had already been rolled away (Mark 16:1-4).

The women entered the tomb and encountered a young man in white sitting inside. He told them Jesus had risen, and he invited them to view the place where Jesus's body had been placed. He also directed them to go and tell the disciples and Peter that they would see Jesus in Galilee, just as He had promised. The women left the tomb overwhelmed (16:5-8).

That same day, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. She reported what she saw but the disciples did not believe her. Jesus also appeared to two who were walking in the country, and they too were not believed when reporting what they had seen. Later, Jesus appeared to the disciples and commissioned them (16:9-14).

 **As you read Mark 16:1-14, look for evidences that attest to the reality of the resurrection.**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SOUGHT (MARK 16:1-4)

¹ When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him.

² Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. ³ They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?” ⁴ Looking up, they noticed that the stone — which was very large — had been rolled away.

VERSES 1-2

Where would you start if you were writing a story you wanted everyone to believe but seemed like an impossible reality? Mark began with a group of witnesses whose testimony would not have been valid in a courtroom in that day. He began with the testimony of a group of women. This happened on Sunday, *when the Sabbath was over*. The *Sabbath* would have ended on Saturday at sundown, though the women would have waited until daylight to go to the tomb.

The first woman mentioned in all the Gospel accounts was *Mary Magdalene*. She was the one Jesus had delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:2). With her was *Mary the mother of James*, the disciple sometimes called James the less. She had been with *Mary Magdalene* at the cross of Jesus (Mark 15:40) and when they laid Jesus’s body in the tomb (15:47). •*Salome* also was with Jesus at the cross (15:40). She was the mother of James and John (Matt. 27:56). Together, these women came to finish what they had started before the Sabbath interrupted them. They came to anoint the body of Jesus with *spices*. Mark added the detail that this was *on the first day of the week*, which was Sunday, and it was also *very early in the morning*, at *sunrise*.

VERSES 3-4

Matthew revealed that the tomb was guarded by soldiers (Matt. 27:62-66), though the women likely would not have known this fact. They wondered aloud who would *roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb*. Tombs often had a circular stone that was set in a groove and rolled in front of the tomb. Often, that tomb was on an incline. The women worried that they would be unable to gather the strength to move the stone, not knowing that God had already taken care of that detail for them.

As they arrived at the tomb, they saw that ***the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away***. Mark does not add the detail that an angel had rolled the stone away (Matt. 28:2-4), though he mentioned an angel in the next verse. The resurrection of Jesus had made the women’s worries and cares unnecessary, just as it also makes many of our fears and worries unnecessary. Because the women sought to show honor to Jesus by going to anoint His body, they became the first human witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. Yet a court of law would not have accepted the testimony of women. This simple fact argues even more for the veracity of the resurrection. Anyone making up a story would surely start with the most trustworthy witnesses.

○ What keeps people from examining the truth of the resurrection?

○ What are some of the everyday fears and worries that the resurrection of Jesus should soothe?

“Not only did God provide a way into the tomb, but He also provided a host to explain it to them.”

RISEN (MARK 16:5-8)

⁵ When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed. ⁶ “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you.’” ⁸ They went out and ran from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid.

VERSES 5-7

The stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out but to allow the witnesses into the tomb. They needed to see evidence of the resurrection. Not only did God provide a way into the tomb, but He also provided a host to explain it to them.

The women entered and saw a **young man** dressed in a **white robe**. Mark never called him an angel, but everything else points to the fact that he was. Angels are often described in white apparel (Matt. 28:3; John 20:12; Acts 1:10; Rev. 4:4). Both Luke and John refer to this being as an angel, but each of them also mention that there were two angels present (Luke 24:3-4; John 20:12). Two was the number required for a testimony to be verified (Deut. 19:15). This does not mean that Mark was mistaken, but he was merely focusing on the one who did the speaking.

The women were **alarmed**, a word used only in Mark that described someone who was amazed or dumbfounded. They were expecting Jesus's corpse, not an angelic being!

The angel responded in a fashion typical of human-angelic encounters. He said, **Don't be alarmed**. Most people who had encounters with angels experienced fear, and the angel would start the conversation by calming their fears (see Dan. 10:12,19; Matt. 28:5; Luke 1:13,30; 2:10; Acts 27:24).

The angel first confirmed that this was indeed the tomb of Jesus, referring to Him as **Jesus of Nazareth**. Second, the angel affirmed the resurrection. He said, **He has risen! He is not here**. The body was not stolen and they were not at the wrong tomb. No earthly person had tampered with the grave. God had emptied it. The angel pointed to **the place where they put him**. This was a shelf carved from rock in the side of the tomb. This was where a body would be laid until it decomposed, then the bones would be gathered and placed in an ossuary (bone box) so that the tomb could be used again later. Jesus never reached that place of decay, for God raised Him on the third day.

“They did not have to go and explain the resurrection. They only needed to go and tell what they had witnessed.”

The angel had instructions for the women—**go** and **tell**. They did not have to go and explain the resurrection. They only needed to **go** and **tell** what they had witnessed. Their audience would be **his disciples and Peter**. Since Peter was a disciple, why would the angel mention him specifically? Perhaps it was because of the pronounced failure Peter had experienced when he denied Jesus (Mark 14:66-72). Though the disciples were last seen fleeing (14:50), Jesus had plans for them.

The message the angel sent to the disciples was that Jesus was on the way to **Galilee**, and they would see Him there. Jesus had told the disciples that, after His resurrection, He would go ahead of them to *Galilee* (14:28). These were the words He spoke prior to Peter's boasting that he would not fail Jesus (14:29). Perhaps the disciples couldn't remember these words because of their own failures. Jesus planned to reconvene with them in the place where His ministry had largely occurred.

VERSE 8

The women left the tomb **trembling**. They were **overwhelmed** with **astonishment**. Seeing an angel, witnessing an empty tomb, and hearing a message that God wanted to use them would be overwhelming. The fear of the moment caused the women to say **nothing to anyone**. Of course, the women would later tell the disciples (Matt. 28:8; Luke 24:9). Some of the earliest manuscripts of Mark end the Gospel at verse 8, but later manuscripts included verses 9-20, what has become known as the longer ending of Mark. We would do well to pause at this point and feel the astonishment of what it means that Jesus was raised from the dead.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Christ was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Ephesians 1:20.)

SEEN (MARK 16:9-14)

⁹ Early on the first day of the week, after he had risen, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and reported to those who had been with him, as they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ Yet, when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it. ¹² After this, he appeared in a different form to two of them walking on their way into the country. ¹³ And they went and reported it to the rest, who did not believe them either. ¹⁴ Later he appeared to the Eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table. He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who saw him after he had risen.

VERSES 9-11

Verses 9-14 are a summary of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. The first appearance was to **Mary Magdalene** in the garden on the **first day of the week**. This is the appearance also mentioned in John 20:16, which was Mary's second visit to the tomb. Though this is the fourth mention of *Mary Magdalene* in Mark (Mark 15:40,47; 16:1), this is the first time it is mentioned that she was the one who had **seven demons** cast from her. This helps to explain her devotion to Jesus even after His death. She had received much grace from Him.


“What they needed was their own encounter with the risen Lord. Someone else’s encounter was not enough for them.”

Mary Magdalene obeyed the command of the angel in Mark 16:7 and took the message to the apostles. This is also mentioned in John 20:2-10. She found them **mourning and weeping**, lost in the sorrow that Jesus had died. This was a natural human reaction. When she told them that **he was alive and had been seen by her**, they **did not believe it**. The disciples' initial reaction is not totally unexpected, as resurrection from the dead is not a daily news item! What they needed was their own encounter with the risen Lord. Someone else's encounter was not enough for them.


VERSES 12-14

Another post-resurrection appearance of Jesus was to two disciples walking down the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-35). Mark 16:12-13 appears to be a shortened version of the Luke passage. When the two reported His appearance to the other disciples, they **did not believe them either**.

The women had difficulty believing. The disciples had difficulty believing. The wider group of Jesus's followers had difficulty believing. They each had to overcome their unbelief and discover the truth that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

 **What role does faith play in how a person views the resurrection of Jesus?**

Mark added one final post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in verse 14. This time Jesus appeared to **the Eleven** and rebuked them for their **unbelief and hardness of heart**. This is likely a recounting of the story in Luke 24:36-44. The disciples were **reclining at the table** when Jesus appeared to them—the normal posture for eating. He **rebuked** them for not believing **those who saw him after he had risen**. This is a reference to the testimony of Mary Magdalene to the disciples. She had told them she had an encounter with Jesus, yet they persisted in their unbelief. From that day forward, they would no longer live in sorrow, fear, or unbelief. They would embrace the message to share the gospel of the resurrected Lord.

 **How should you approach those who have persisted in their unbelief about His resurrection?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

While each of the four Gospels include the accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, all four are unique in their accounts. Read the following passages to help you gain a better understanding of this account: Matthew 27-28:10; Luke 23-24:49; and John 19-20:29. Compare these accounts to Mark 16. Record any differences you find. In what ways do the four accounts give you a fuller understanding of the events and significance of the resurrection?

Mark:

The Man and the Gospel

Biblical references reveal that John Mark was a Jewish Christian, companion of Barnabas and Paul, and associate of Simon Peter.

Church tradition affirms John Mark as writer of the second Gospel. The New Testament mentions Mark ten times.¹ The first reference occurs when Peter, freshly delivered from jail, visited the believers praying for him in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Coinciding with Peter's deliverance, Barnabas and Saul visited Jerusalem to deliver the Antioch church's famine relief. Upon concluding their mission, they returned to Antioch, taking along John Mark. (See Acts 12:12; 11:30; 12:25.)

Barnabas and Saul, with John in tow, traveled across Cyprus preaching the gospel in synagogues. Only John's Jewish name is referenced, and Saul's, reflecting the Jewish context of their ministry. Encouraged by success, Barnabas and Saul extended the tour to Anatolia, but John Mark returned to Jerusalem (13:5,13).

Preparing for a return visit, Barnabas intended to include John Mark. Paul refused because of

Mark's earlier desertion. Disagreement divided the team (15:36-40). Acts does not mention Barnabas and Mark again.

The remaining biblical references to John Mark show improved relations between Paul, Barnabas, and Mark. These references drop his Jewish name ("John") and demonstrate his familiarity to Gentile Christians. Writing to the Colossians, Paul referenced Mark's Jewishness, requested the believers at Colossae to welcome him, and revealed that Mark was Barnabas's cousin (Col. 4:10-11).

Significantly, Barnabas and Mark were known in a Pauline church, indicating the old rift had healed. Furthermore, Philemon, the companion communiqué of Colossians, forwards Mark's greetings and describes Mark as Paul's coworker (Philem. 23-24). Later, Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark, who is "useful to me in the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). Paul was evidently now impressed with Mark's ministry.

The last biblical reference to Mark conveys Peter's high esteem for him. Peter called him "his son."

(1 Pet. 5:13). Peter had observed Mark's ministry over time, and his association with Mark had become a close ministerial relationship.

Though the New Testament grows silent about Mark, church tradition continues. If Peter's mention of Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13) referred to Rome, then the Bible last mentions Mark being in Rome with Peter.

Church historian Eusebius wrote that Papias, an early church leader, stated that Mark was Peter's interpreter in Rome and recorded the apostle's recollections of the Lord. Eusebius stated that Mark was sent to Alexandria, Egypt, where he proclaimed the gospel and was the first to establish churches there. Mark remained the leader of the Alexandrian church until his death.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF MARK'S GOSPEL

1. Action—One distinguishing characteristic is Mark's emphasis on action and movement. Mark used the Greek word usually translated "immediately" forty-one times to emphasize the continuous motion of events. He occasionally wrote in the historical present.² Furthermore, about sixty percent of Mark's sentences begin with "and," rendering an "out-of-breath" recitation of Jesus's amazing activities.

2. Secrecy—Mark also emphasizes secrecy. Jesus silenced demons and commanded people not to tell others about being healed. Jesus instructed the disciples not to reveal His identity until after His resurrection.³ This emphasis ends after the transfiguration seemingly because of two reasons: the disciples understood Jesus's identity, and His ministry became increasingly private as He focused more time on them.

3. Discipleship—Mark's Gospel stresses discipleship. Mark often used the word "follow" to refer to discipleship.⁴ Jesus called disciples, and they followed Him.

Following Jesus demonstrates faith. Jesus challenged this faith to increase by teaching and performing miracles. Mark provides some samplings of Jesus's teaching and states several times that Jesus taught His followers.⁵

4. Gospel—Mark focuses foremost importance on the gospel. The first verse of Mark characterizes the entire book as gospel: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Furthermore, Mark states that all of Jesus's preaching centered on the gospel (vv. 14-15).

Therefore, followers must gauge their walk with Christ based on the contribution their sacrifice of faith makes to the advancement of the gospel (8:35; 10:29; 14:9). Finally, the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations (16:15).



5. Passion Narrative—One other distinctive in Mark’s Gospel is its extended Passion narrative (begins in Mark 10:32). Mark gives more attention to Jesus’s passion than any other Gospel. This underscores Mark’s commitment to focus on the good news of Christ.

These five characteristics also point to Mark’s audience. Mark’s readers were Gentile nonbelievers. His vivid writing style portrayed how Jesus was involved in His followers’ lives. Mark’s readers too are called to follow Jesus and become His disciples. The secrecy theme teaches that readers must know Jesus personally. The emphasis on discipleship yields rich lessons on developing faith in Christ. The attention on the gospel shows the

importance that it should have in one’s life and ministry. And the focus on Jesus’s passion reveals to every nonbeliever the great offer of life that Jesus’s sacrificial death provides.

1. Acts 12:12,25; 13:5,13; 15:37,39; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24; 1 Pet. 5:13.
2. The “historical” present is a writing style that uses present tense verbs to describe past events. This technique builds drama and draws the reader into the action. An example is Mark 1:12, which reads: “The Spirit immediately drives him out into the wilderness.” The Greek verb “drives” is in the present tense. In contrast, proper English style requires using past tense verbs to describe action in past events. Therefore, translators commonly change the tense of the verb in situations like this. In this verse, the English rendering becomes: “The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.”
3. At the exorcisms: Mark 1:25,34; 3:11-12. At the healings: Mark 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26. To the disciples: Mark 8:30; 9:9.
4. Mark 1:33,45; 2:2,13,15; 3:7,9,20; 4:1,36; 5:21,24,31; 6:34; 8:1; 9:15,25; 10:1,46.
5. See chapters 4, 7, and 10 for samplings of Jesus’s teaching. References to Jesus teaching: Mark 2:13; 4:33; 6:2,6,34; 10:1; 12:35.

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COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

GENESIS 1-19

Session 1: **The First Week** (Genesis 1:1-5,26-2:3)

Session 2: **The First Couple** (Genesis 2:7-9,15-25)

Session 3: **The First Sin** (Genesis 3:1-7,21-24)

Session 4: **The First Christmas** (Luke 2:1-15)

Session 5: **The First Murder** (Genesis 4:1-15)

Session 6: **Judgment** (Genesis 6:13-22; 7:20-24)

Session 7: **Land!** (Genesis 8:10-22)

Session 8: **Protect** (Genesis 9:1-15)

Session 9: **Stalled** (Genesis 11:1-9)

Session 10: **Promised** (Genesis 12:1-5; 13:11-18)

Session 11: **Impatience** (Genesis 15:1-6; 16:1-6)

Session 12: **Established** (Genesis 17:1-10,15-19)

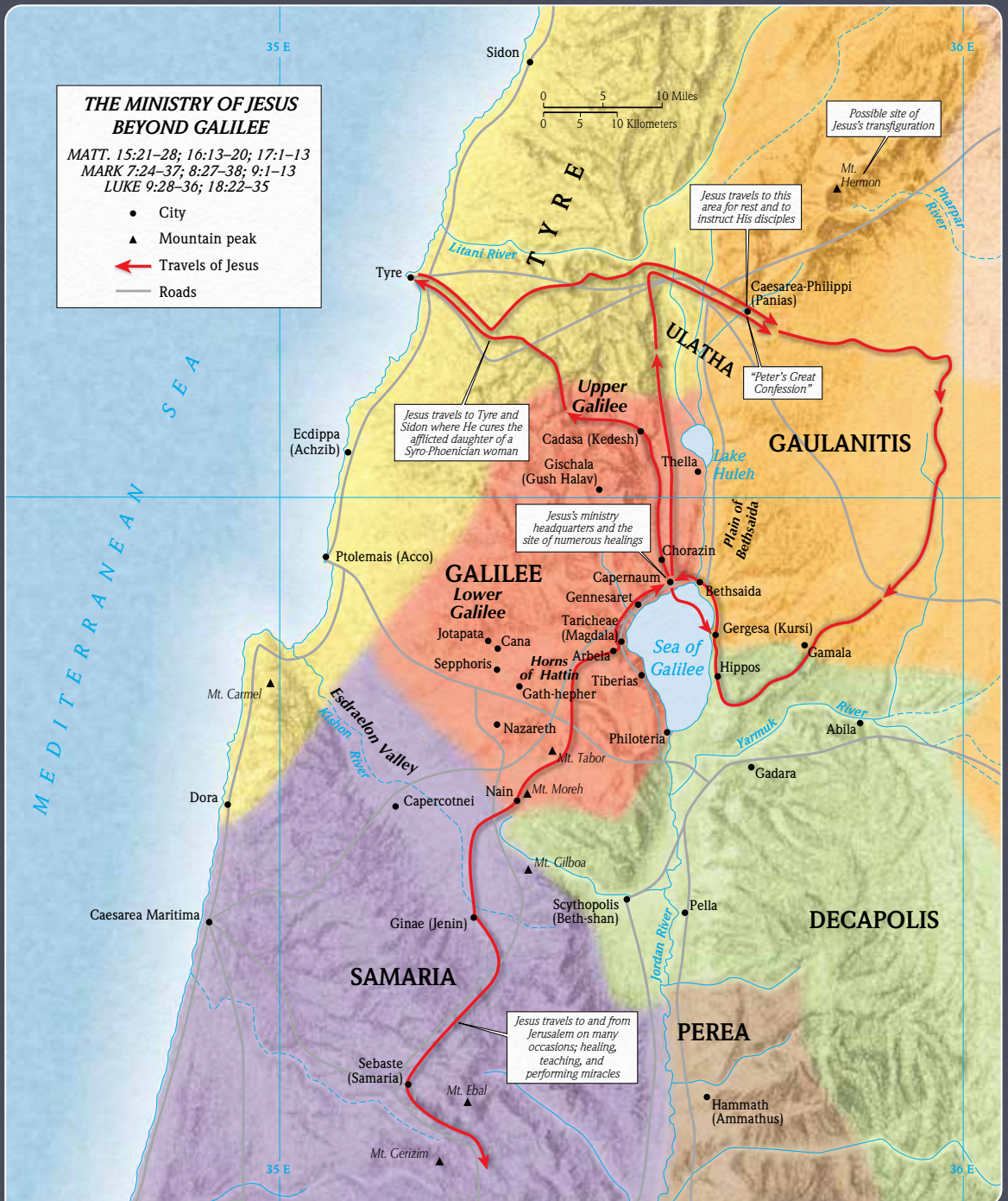
Session 13: **Purged** (Genesis 19:12-26)

Jesus's Ministry in Mark's Gospel

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS BEYOND GALILEE

MATT. 15:21-28; 16:13-20; 17:1-13
 MARK 7:24-37; 8:27-38; 9:1-13
 LUKE 9:28-36; 18:22-35

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Travels of Jesus
- Roads



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MARK

Mark had seen a lot over the years. He had spent time with Jesus and His disciples. He had traveled with Barnabas and Paul. He even ministered to Peter in Rome. These experiences made him uniquely qualified to write about Jesus's life and ministry. Mark's Gospel isn't long, but it's filled with timeless insights about who Christ is and why He came. In *Mark*, we learn how to be a genuine servant and disciple. It's a first-century narrative with a healthy dose of application for today.

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