

Long Story Short: Mark



The Big Picture:

- ◆ 1 John introduces Jesus
- ◆ 1-3 Jesus' mission in Galilee
- ◆ 3-6 Jesus' mission around Galilee
- ◆ 6-9 Jesus' mission beyond Galilee
- ◆ 10 Jesus travels to Jerusalem
- ◆ 11-13 Confrontation with leaders in Jerusalem
- ◆ 14-15 Jesus' last days and crucifixion
- ◆ 16:1-8 The empty tomb

Key Themes in Mark:

1. Mark's prologue (1:1-13) reveals to the reader Jesus' true identity as Israel's messiah: BUT, few of the characters in the story realize this. Reading Mark is about watching people wake up to a truth you already know from the first sentence.
2. Jesus comes to announce God's kingdom (1:14-15) and to bring it into being by healing people (healing stories in chs. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10).
3. Jesus knows people will misunderstand what it means for him to be the messiah, so he continually tries to hide his identity in public (called "the messianic secret")
 - He silences people (or spirits!) who announce his identity and tells people not to spread the word about himself: 1:25-28; 1:34, 44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26
4. People continually misunderstand Jesus and his mission:
 - People are continually astonished and afraid of Jesus: 1:22, 27; 2:12; 4:41, etc...
 - The disciples don't comprehend what it means for Jesus to be the messiah: they think he will be a conquering king, but Jesus knows he will have to be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53
 - Jesus Predicts his death 8:31; 9:31; 19:32-34
 - Disciples Misunderstand 8:32-34; 9:33-34; 10:35-41
 - Jesus tries to correct them 8:34-9:1; 9:35-37; 10:42-45
5. Jesus' controversial kingdom announcement and his redefinition of what it means to be the covenant people of God attracts bitter opposition from Israel's religious authorities: Jesus is constantly challenging Israel's cherished institutions
 - Forgiveness of sins: 2:1-12; Fasting: 2:18-22; Working on Sabbath: 2:23-28; Healing on Sabbath: 3:1-6; Casting out demons: 3:22-30; Ritual hand-washing: 7:1-13; Divorce: 10:2-12; Clearing the temple: 11:27-33; Paying taxes: 12:13-17
6. Jesus sees his death as necessary to establish the New Covenant and inaugurate God's kingdom
 - 14:45 "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."
 - The Passover meal: 14:17-25
 - Jesus becomes Israel's king in his crucifixion: 15:16-26
7. The oldest manuscripts of Mark we have end at 16:8 with the empty tomb
 - As all English translations note, 16:9-20 is a later addition to the Gospel and is not original
 - Scholars disagree whether (1) 16:8 is the original ending planned by Mark or (2) whether the end of Mark's scroll was broken off at that point so that the original ending was lost.
 - Either way, 16:8 ends with the disciples dismayed at the empty tomb. A powerful ending to a Gospel where Jesus is mysterious and breaks everyone's categories.
8. The ending at 16:8 puts the question to the reader: "will you be afraid and tell no one like the disciples, or will you be bold and tell others about Jesus?" Your answer?