

The Gospel of Mark: Who is this?

Mark 4:35-41

Once again Jesus is withdrawing from the crowds (and is apparently quite a heavy sleeper). The disciples' question is the heart of Mark's Gospel (Who is this?) and yet it displays a lack of understanding.

Jesus rebukes not only the storm on the sea but the lack of faith of the disciples.

Their response is not joy and thanksgiving but fear.

Fear is never positive in Mark (5:15, 36; 9:32).

Mark 8:27-38

The centre of Mark's Gospel is this question: Who is this man?

Peter answers correctly ("the Christ") but doesn't understand it fully (8:32).

Peter, speaking on behalf of the disciples (and remember the Gospel is based on Peter's preaching) rebukes Jesus.

Peter rebukes Jesus verbally and physically. ("Get behind me, Satan!")

Suffering as a Disciple

Suffering for the sake of the Gospel

What happens to Jesus, happens to me.

Avoiding the cross is Satanic.

Being persecuted is something to celebrate not a reason to defend your rights.

It means you are of Christ.

Matthew 15:27-39

"Come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." (v.32)

Of course, Jesus does not honour their request.

Finally the right claim: "The Son of God" (v.39)

No human knows who Jesus is until he dies.

Jesus himself had made clear that he could not be known apart from his death (8:30-33; 9:9).

The first human to "get it" is a Gentile, a Roman centurion.

The disciples are with him for 2 years, but don't get it without the cross.

The Roman centurion is with him for 3 hours and gets it because of the cross.

Mark 16:1-8

Mark's Abrupt and Short Ending

On most Bibles after Mark 16:8 it reads: "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20."

The language usage, verb tense, themes, and vocabulary of 16:9-20 don't match up with the rest of Mark, but they are common in other Gospels.

The early Church Fathers did not acknowledge the longer ending of Mark, but this has been largely disregarded.

Jesus promises that no sign will be given (8:12).

Jesus' refusal to come down from the cross so that the Jewish leaders would "see and believe" fits the shorter ending.

The response of the women at the tomb ("they were afraid") is not the correct response.

But Jesus still calls them to follow, to go back to Galilee...and get it right.

Now we can go back to the beginning of Mark's Gospel and read it again and again...God keeps calling us back. The book (and the disciple) are "incomplete." God isn't finished with me yet (9:24).

"It is difficult to be faithful on the basis of the Word alone—the disciples are testimony to that fact! Yet that promise is always sure. There will be a full revelation of the glorious, risen Christ, but for now we can only believe the witness of the Word" (Voelz, *Mark*, 61).

1 Christ be my Leader by night as by day;
Safe through the darkness, for He is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future His care,
Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

2 Christ be my Teacher in age as in youth,
Drifting or doubting, for He is the truth.
Grant me to trust Him; though shifting as sand,
Doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.

3 Christ be my Savior in calm as in strife;
Death cannot hold me, for He is the life.
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain
Can touch my salvation: with Jesus I reign.

Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, 1926

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