



What about 16:9-20?

- *Mark concludes his gospel at 16:8. The remaining verses were added later.*
 - *That verse 8 is the official end of Mark's gospel is not seriously debated.*
 - *The contention that this was the original ending though, is debated.*
 - *Some note that the gospel should end with fear seems incomplete.*
 - *Some propose that the lost ending includes an appearance to Peter and to the disciples in Galilee as promised. And an exhortation to faith and joy for believers.*
 - *But perhaps not. That Mark should conclude his gospel this way is consistent with the motifs of astonishment and fear Mark notes throughout his book. In verse 8, Mark sounds a note which he understood characterized all of Jesus' activity of healing, miracles, teaching, and his journey to Jerusalem.*
 - *Astonishment & fear qualify the events of Jesus' life.*
 - *That the empty tomb with its soul-shaking response should conclude the gospel is wholly consistent with the understanding of Mark.*
 - *A fitting conclusion to 1:1 "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."*

What is *Mark's Gospel?*

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God

- “Gospel” or “evangel” was not first coined among Christians.
- The concept was significant already in both Jewish and Roman culture.
- Romans used “joyful tidings” in association with emperor worship to announce festivals (called “evangels” of his birthday and day of accession to power) celebrated by the whole Roman world.
- Mark’s Roman readers understood Mark’s announcement of the inauguration of Jesus’ public ministry as a radically new state of affairs.

How does Mark present *His Gospel?*

- Mark presents a historical narrative organized around a crisis – the death of Jesus the Messiah. Mark’s readers were confronting a similar crisis to the one faced by Jesus.
- Theme = CHRIST THE SERVANT
For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” – Mark 10:45
- Jesus does not come so we might serve Him, but so He can serve us. So much Christian discussion is around how we must serve Jesus. But Mark rebukes that idea, reminding us that Jesus delights to serve us.
- Mark divides his gospel into two major sections:
 - The Service of the Servant – (1:1-8:30)
 - The Sacrifice of the Servant – (8:31-16:20)

How does Mark present *His Gospel?*

In the first half –

- Mark proves that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.
- Mark calls witnesses similar to John to make his points for him.
- Climaxes with the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah (Mark 8:29).
- All that precedes it has prepared for this moment of recognition.

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." - Mar 8:28-29 ("the Son of the Living God." - Matt. 16:16)

In the second half –

- Mark follows Jesus to Jerusalem & the Passion, clarifying what being Messiah means.
- Climaxes with the confession of the centurion in charge of the crucifixion

And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" - Mar 15:39

How does Mark present *His Gospel?*

Because Mark's purpose is to bear witness to the Messiah, his focus is on the CROSS where the revelation of God in Christ is most clearly seen.

- Throughout his Gospel, Mark accelerates the tension and movement culminating in the Passion narrative. The task and destiny of the Son is presented in the few words of Jesus Mark records as the reason for which Jesus was sent into the world by the Father (2:17, 8:31, 9:31, 33)
- These statements involve Mark's readers in the offense of the cross and prepare us to be left before the witness of the empty tomb in the words of the angel (16:5-6)

Mark's approach is pastoral because he is first the pastor of the church in Rome. Thus he deals with suffering, betrayal by family, high cost of total discipleship, and the transcendent dignity of Christ.

Mark calls witnesses – the Father, Peter, the centurion, angels, demons (who acknowledge his divine sonship), prophets (John the Baptist, Elijah, Isaiah, David "the LORD said to my Lord") and others (Joseph of Arimathea, the women who followed Jesus). Why? Because he is making a case, proving Jesus to be the Messiah.

And he also presents Christ as always willing (1:41, 9:22-23, chapters 4-5)

Mark calls for incarnational living | 3:20-22

— Zeal for the Lord

- Consider Abraham
- Consider David
- Consider Solomon
- Consider Isaiah
- Consider Jeremiah
- Consider Hosea
- Consider Ezekiel
- Consider John the Baptist
- Consider the widow
- Consider Mary of Bethany
- Consider Christ

There is an incarnational logic to their ministries: these prophets were not just speakers of the word—they lived it out in their lives, through their actions, their choice of clothing, and even their very bodies. They are thus witnesses to how totally transforming and disruptive the Word of God can be when we let it consume our whole lives.

Mark expects us to see the Kingdom of God come in Jesus

— Mark expects us to recognize Jesus' authority to compel through his word –

- To compel disciples to abandon their occupation and become fishers of men.
- To compel the physical world (wind, waves, bread, healing, resurrection)
- To compel demons to obedience and silence.
- To compel men to alarm through his word.

— Mark expects us to see the Kingdom of God come in Jesus –

- This is the “good news” of the coming King, not the Roman emperor.
- The demons known him as his sworn enemies shrieking against him (1:24, 3:11, 5:7) (they know Jesus defeated their master, Satan, with his temptations in chapter 1).
- The only difference between the disciples and the Pharisees and the demons was their view of the Messiah.

— Mark expects us to find unexpected encounters with Jesus. And to be “amazed at him”!

Mark expects to open blind eyes | 8:22-30

- *At the center of his gospel, Mark places the recognition that Jesus is the Messiah. Three unexpected elements unique only to this miracle –*
 - *Jesus questions if his action had been effective?*
 - *The explicit reference to partial healing.*
 - *The laying on of hands a second time to complete the healing.*

- *Expected since Mark 1:1. Yet from 1:1 - 8:29 there is no recognition of this fact in spite of remarkable evidence which demands a decision about Christ's identity.*
 - *Jesus displays extraordinary power that astonishes his countrymen though they do not recognize his true identity (1:27, 2:7, 6:2).*
 - *He associates with sinners and disregards conventions of piety so scandalous that the guardians of tradition can only think in terms of the demonic (2:15-20, 3:22-30, 7:1-5).*
 - *That demons recognize him communicates nothing to bystanders except opposition to Jesus (1:24f, 3:30f, 5:7f).*
 - *Disciples discuss Jesus' identity but find no categories to understand him (4:41, 6:51) so fail to recognize him (8:17-21).*

By weaving these narratives through the first half of his gospel, Mark creates a tension which can only be resolved by the recognition of Jesus' dignity.

Parables . . .

- *Parables were told to . . .*
 - *Often make the truth more engaging and clear, Luke 15:3. They appeal to the imagination enticing the hearer to judge, then applying that judgment to them.*
 - *Sometimes used to make truth obscure to those who lacked spiritual sensitivity.*

- *Two levels (strata) are at play – the natural and the redemptive.*
 - *Parables reveal the nature of redemption that had previously been hidden.*
 - *The realism arises from the certainty that no mere analogy exists between the natural illustration and redemptive reality as both originate in the purpose of God. Thus, there is an inner affinity, not just an outer illustration.*
 - *This is why the created order "is like" the "Kingdom of God." The natural life of men was intentionally created to be an illustration of the Kingdom of God. Contemplating one can reveal the intentions of the other.*

Mark expects us to understand the Gospel | 4:1-20

- *Framed at beginning and end with a solemn call to attentive hearing (3, 9). This sets this parable apart as the key to the others. Hence the interpretation (13-20).*
- *The story is faithful to the reality of Palestinian agriculture, where plowing follows sowing.*
 - *The sower is not careless scattering the seed on the path or among thorns or on rocky places.*
 - *He does so Intentionally. For he will plow AFTER he sows.*
- *This is important to the correct interpretation.*
 - *Sowing is more important to the story than soils.*
 - *The Kingdom of God breaks into the world as seed which is sown.*
 - *The diversity of response correlating to the soils is not the primary consideration.*
 - *God is the central figure. Sowing the central action.*

Mark expects us to understand the Gospel | 4:1-20

- *The climax is the glorious character of the harvest – some 30X, 60X, 100X.*
 - *This harvest is achieved against the background of many obstacles.*
 - *The emphasis is not on the waste of seed, but on the splendor of the harvest.*
 - *The harvest is glorious. The Kingdom will be glorious!*
- *Teaches the relationship between the breaking out of the Kingdom and the end harvest.*
 - *Jesus is the Seed.*
 - *He is falling to the ground and dying (John 12:23-26).*
 - *And his harvest shall be glorious!*
- *Why is the “mystery of the Kingdom of God” veiled in parables?*
 - *Only understood against the backdrop of unbelief and opposition.*
 - *A distinction is made between the disciples (to whom God entrusts the mystery of the Kingdom) and the unbelieving multitude (from whom the truth is concealed).*
 - *The revelation of God is only accepted or rejected when it enters the human scene. That acceptance or rejection is contingent not on the seed but on the soil.*

Mark expects us to understand the Gospel | 4:1-20

- *Two classes of people confronted by a single event, the revelation of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The difference is faith (believing).*
 - *Revelation + unbelief = parables, no harvest, only a parable, an enigma.*
 - *Revelation + belief = secrets understood, abundant harvest. Faith precedes the Kingdom.*
 - *BELIEVING always precedes SEEING in the Bible.*

- *Jesus cites Isa 6:9-10 - must be understood with the prefix "That it might be fulfilled . . ."*
 - *Context is Isaiah's commissioning. His ministry = revelation causing hardening (specifically revelation of judgment and the coming Messiah). Jesus cites Isaiah not to explain why he speaks in parables.*
 - *But to say he is "filling up" this prophecy, like Isaiah, in the context of unbelief.*
 - *It does not mean those "outside" are excluded the possibility of belief. But they are excluded the possibility of further instruction in the secrets of the Kingdom so long as unbelief continues.*

Jesus' presence means the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom has come. And only discerned through faith. Jesus' very presence is a disclosure and a veiling; it releases both grace and judgment.

Applications | Mark expects us to be amazed at Jesus

Mar 1:22, 27 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ... The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him."

Mar 2:12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Mar 5:20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Mar 6:2, 51 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? ... Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,

Applications | Mark expects us to be amazed at Jesus

Mar 10:24, 26 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ... The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

Mar 11:18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

Mar 12:17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.

Mar 15:5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Mar 16:8 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.

Mark expects us to respond in faith to the revelation of Christ

— *Mark expects us to respond in faith to the revelation of the Kingdom in Christ –*

- *The only acceptable response to the Word of God is faith.*
- *In the subduing of the sea, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith expressed in their terror and fear. 9:28-29 "Lord, increase our faith!"*
- *Look again at the parable of the sower – Mark 4:20 "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."*

— *Faith is not only the key to life, it is the key to the rest of Mark. In each of these 4 miracles and in the remaining chapters, the Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ invites the response of faith.*

- *The key to the rest of Mark is the interpretation of the parable of the sower.*
- *God sows Christ, the good news, which is only effective when combined with faith.*
- *The one who receives Christ must understand his mission. He must reason from the unseen to the seen.*

Mark expects total commitment to Christ | 8:34-38

- *Jesus calls us to the realization that suffering is not only his destiny but ours. The humiliation of the Messiah (8:31) is the mysterious prototype of the Christian.*
- *We must shift the center of gravity in our lives from concern for self to reckless abandon to the will of God, a sustained willingness to say “No” to self to say “Yes” to God. Self-idolatry must die.*
- *This demand is reinforced through the horrifying image of a death march. “Bearing the cross” was not a Jewish metaphor and would have sounded repugnant to the crowd. It evokes a condemned man going to die and forced to carry the instrument of execution.*
- *Cross-bearing was a reality for the early church. And a reality for Jesus (15:21).*
- *This statement exposes the ambivalent concept of life. Life is precious if we are to use it to answer the call to disown self and sacrifice life (8:34).*
- *Christ’s intention is that those who follow him should not be detached observers of his passion but growing in faith and understanding through participation in his sufferings.*

Mark expects total commitment to Christ | 8:34-38

- *The contrast between ordinary human life and life as an expression of salvation indicates the irony of “save” and “suffer loss” in verse 35. Jesus appreciates the frailty and fleetingness of life. So he enjoins us to “save” it in a deeper sense than ordinary travelers through time.*
- *The linchpin on which salvation swings is “Jesus and the gospel.” Exclusivity is demanded. The locus of commitment is Jesus himself. Jesus employs language of commerce – profit, gain, loss, exchange. Advantage is gained – “whole world” – but payment is eternal – “for his soul.” These cannot really be compared.*
- *The absurdity of a man who secures his own life in preference to participation in the salvation provided by God underscore the fateful stakes of denying Jesus.*
- *Each of Jesus’ successive statements reinforces the irony of verse 38.*
 - *The commitment to Christ permits no turning back.*
 - *And a willingness to submit to the will of God even to the cross.*
 - *Suffering with the Messiah is what permits sharing in his glory (Rom 8:17).*
 - *Loss is then defined referring to the final judgment committed to the Son of Man.*

Mark expects total commitment to Christ | 8:34-38

- *The motive for denying Christ is born out of anxiety of one's life and a basic unwillingness to be made an object of contempt by the world. Peter would fall prey to this (14:66-72).*
- *In 38a, Jesus refers to himself in first person. But in 38b, he uses the most appropriate name for the glory of the Parousia when he will come for judgment. The ironic significance is that the Son of Man and Jesus are one and the same. To deny Christ is to deny the final Judge himself. The criteria for man's acceptance or rejection before the Son of Man is our loyalty or disloyalty to Jesus now.*
- *In Jesus' commitment, we find our paradigm of commitment to the glory of God. Jesus can accomplish his mission only if his glory means nothing and the Father's glory means everything (cf. widow's 2 pence, anointing by Mary – "the poor you have always with you, but you will not always have 'This poor man'").*
- *But God does not fail to recognize Christ's submission to his will and the humiliation of the cross. And the hour comes when the Son of Man is glorified by the Father for whose glory he lived and died.*

On behalf of Mark, thank you. Conclusion from chapter 13 –

"At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "