

'On your Marks..'

A whistle-stop tour of Mark's account of the life and ministry of Jesus

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" [Mark 1.14f]

Mark was a man on a mission, and he was writing for people in a hurry. His is the shortest of the four gospel accounts, and a sense of great urgency runs through it all. He puts the spotlight on Jesus, and he wants his readers to see from the start both *that*, and *why*, Jesus is good news: and *how* He becomes good news for each of us.

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".. and they crucified Him .."

Mark 15.21-47

Mark's use of two similar narratives to underline the truth to which he is pointing is continued here in a heightened way. There are 2 individuals (Simon, Joseph) and 2 rebels; 2 sets of insults and 2 sets of comments; 2 great statements about Jesus from Roman 'lips' and 2 great effects of His death; and 2 sorts of darkness at the heart of the narrative.

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1. **Read Mark 15.21-47.** The narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus is carefully structured by Mark, with the immediate 'prequel' (vv.21-26) mirroring in many ways the immediate 'sequel' (vv.38-47).

What strikes you most as you read through Mark's account here of the death of Jesus?

What clues do you find here as to why the message preached was 'Jesus Christ *and Him crucified*' (1 Cor.2.2)?

2. Read Mark 15.21-26. The 'lead up' to Jesus sees a man being pulled unexpectedly into the story, and culminates in a clear statement being made about Jesus (v.26)

How did you get 'pulled into the story'?

What significance do you think Mark attaches to Jesus' refusal of the wine, and their division of His clothes?

What relevance do you see in it having been '*nine in the morning*' (v.25) when the Spirit was subsequently poured out on the church (Acts 2.15)?

3. Read Mark 15.27-37. Jesus is flanked by two 'rebels' and subject to sustained insults as He hangs on the cross: the literal darkness is matched by the spiritual darkness He experiences.

Read Isaiah 53.12: what light does that prophetic verse throw on the crucifixion of Jesus?

Jesus experienced a dreadful darkness: what comprised that darkness for Him?

How does Jesus' experience here help us understand the references Jesus made to people being thrown 'outside, into the darkness' (see Matt.8:12, 22:13, & 25:30).

4. Read Mark 15.38-47. 'Mirroring' the 'lead up' to Jesus' death, the sequel starts with a statement about Jesus and culminates in the unexpected involvement in the story of another individual.

How do the statements of the centurion (v.39), and the governor (v.25) illustrate Mark's opening line (Mk.1.1)?

What do you think Mark wanted his readers to learn from his narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus?

What have you learned from studying this passage?