

'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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".. was crucified .. has risen .."

Mark 16.1-8

This is the so-called 'short' ending: the 'longer' endings are not likely to have been Mark's work. His account all along has been shorter than those of the other gospel writers: his ending as we have it is certainly more abrupt!

Dissatisfying (and quite possibly incomplete) as the ending we have might be, it does nonetheless set out the basic facts in a way that affords both encouragement and challenge to Mark's readers.

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1. Read Mark 16.1-8. The very brevity of Mark's account of Jesus' resurrection is in keeping with the whole account he has given of the life and ministry of Jesus. He doesn't beat about the bush!

What message does Mark want to get across?

The literal resurrection of Jesus is basic to the message of the Bible: how did you come to be convinced that it took place?

2. Read Mark 16.1-3. In their devotion to Jesus, the women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body - despite being aware that there is a major problem obstructing their endeavour!

Read **Mk.15.40f & 47**: in what ways (if any!) are you challenged by the devotion/commitment of these women?

How do you approach and respond to what seem to be insuperable problems?

3. Read Mark 16.4-7. The stone at the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away, and the 'alarm' of the women is addressed and removed by the assurances given to them.

What is the assurance given to the women?

What encouragement does that assurance give you?

Why do you think Peter was singled out by name as recorded by Mark here in v.7?

4. **Read Mark 16.8.** The account as we have it ends somewhat abruptly as Mark records the immediate response of the women to what they had heard and seen.

If this is indeed the conclusion to Mark's account (many take the view that there must be a bit missing) what do you think would have been his reason for ending thus?

In what ways do you find comfort in the realism whereby Mark records the fear and bewilderment of the women?

What is scary and bewildering about the gospel?

How might you help someone get beyond that fear and bewilderment?