

Re-reading Mark's Story

∞ of ∞

Jesus

Dr Karl Möller, November 2023



Re-reading Mark's story of Jesus

1. Reading Mark
2. A healing, a misunderstanding, and some discipleship instructions (8:22–9:1)
3. Reading Mark politically
4. The beginning (1:1–20) and the ending(s) (16:1–8 [20?])

Slides and notes at: karlmoeller.net/mark/

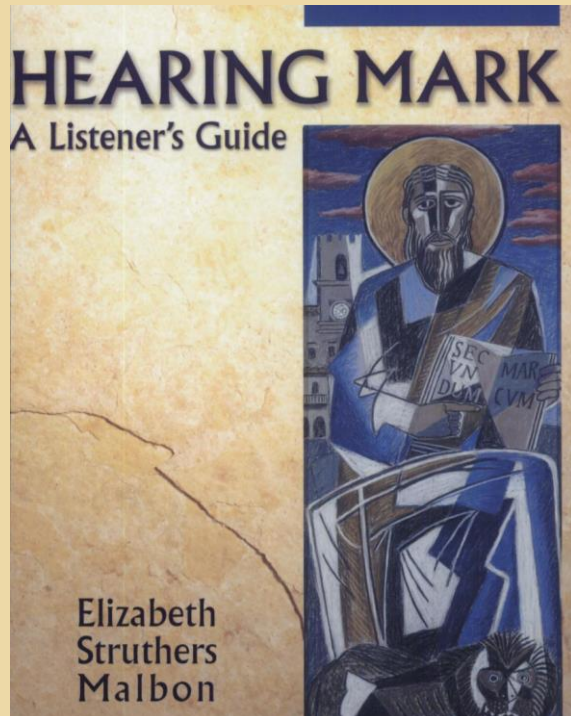


1

Reading Mark



Hearing Mark



Malbon, E. S. (2002), *Hearing Mark: A listener's guide*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.

David Suchet, reading Mark's Gospel at St Paul's Cathedral (2017), youtu.be/JjOgcMQXvSc



Mark's roughness

- shortest Gospel: lacks, e.g., Sermon on the Mount, resurrection
- rougher style
- 'harder wordings': Jesus could not perform miracles (6:5-6) vs. Jesus did not perform miracles (Matt. 13:58)
- Jesus asks questions, but not in Matthew (cf. e.g., Mark 6:35-44 and Matt. 14:15-21)
- portrays disciples critically
- lacks Matthew's 'heightened' theology





The beginning of the good
news of Jesus Christ
[Christos = mashiach
(Messiah) = 'anoointed one'],
the Son of God.

Mark 1:1

Mark's pace (ch. 1)

- John the Baptist's ministry and preaching (1:4-8)
- Jesus' baptism (1:9-11)
- Jesus' temptation (1:12-13)
- Jesus proclaiming the kingdom of God and repentance (1:14-15)
- Jesus forming a group of disciples (1:16-20)



Mark's pace (ch. 1)

continued

- Jesus engaging in teaching and healing ministry:
 - man with unclean spirit in the synagogue (1:21-28)
 - Peter's mother-in-law (1:29-31)
 - many others who are sick or possessed (1:32-34)
 - Jesus going round the towns and synagogues of Galilee (1:35-39)
 - Jesus healing a leper (1:40-45)



kai euthus

- 'and immediately'
- used 11 times in chapter 1: vv. 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43
 - 'In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed' (1:35)
- over 40 times in Mark, as often as in the rest of the New Testament

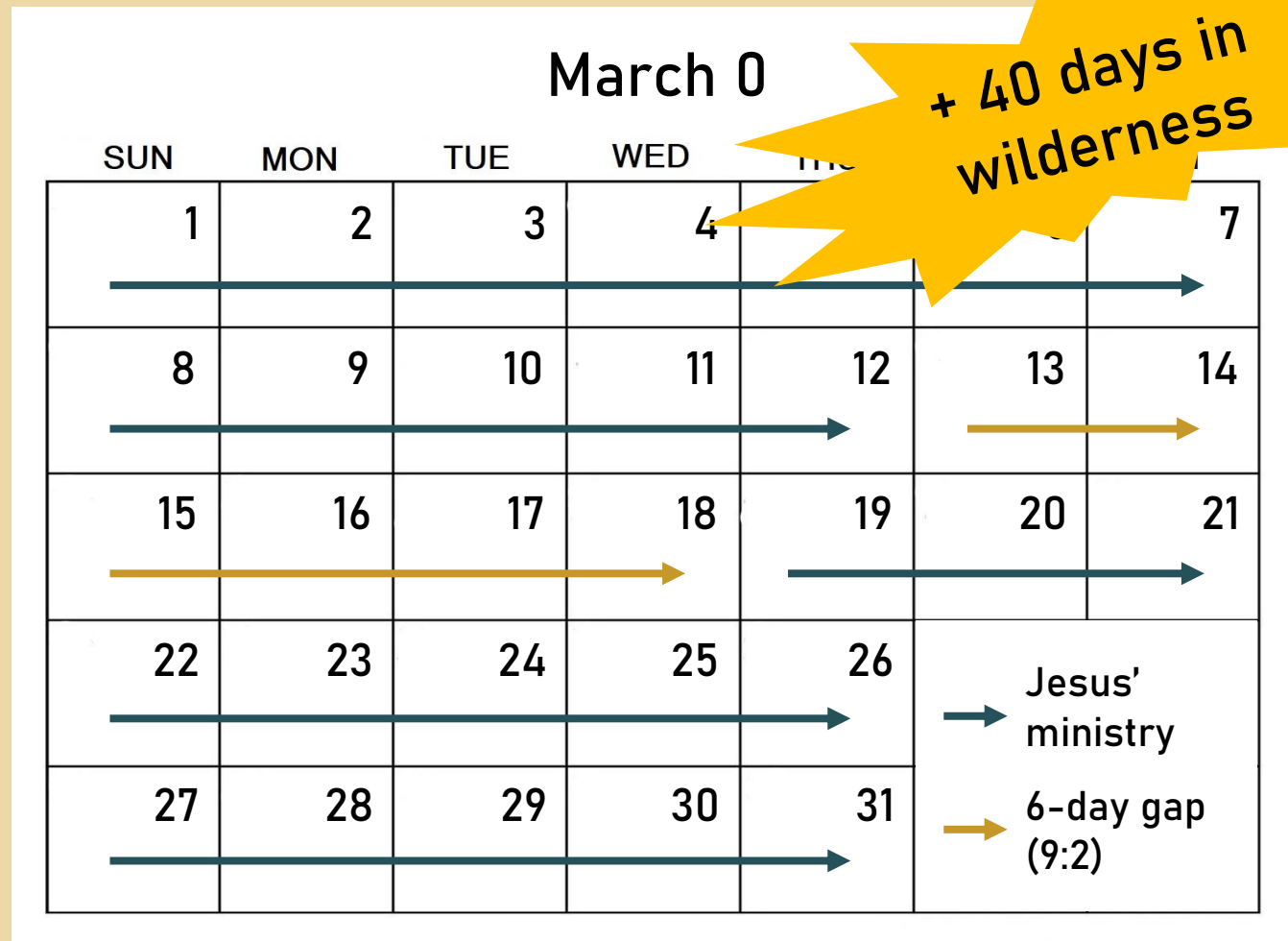


Mark's 'historic present'

- 1:12: 'immediately the Spirit drives him out into the wilderness' (NRSV: 'drove')
- 1:30: 'now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately tell him about her' (NRSV: 'told')
- Mark uses the historic present 151 times
- ignored by many translations, causing us to miss Mark's unique urgency



Jesus' ministry according to Mark?



Thinking about Mark's storytelling

When you read Mark's Gospel, pay attention to how he portrays Jesus and the disciples. What might be the significance of him presenting Jesus in a very down-to-earth way (not calling him 'Lord', noting he couldn't do miracles, emphasising his distress at Gethsemane) while highlighting the disciples' failure to understand and stay with him (e.g., 8:27-33 and at the end of his Gospel)?

What do you make of Mark's pace and urgency (the immediates, the historic present, the rapid sequencing of event after event) in connection with the story he wishes to tell?



‘an action-filled narrative played out with its audience always foremost in mind’

Mark's text has been carefully designed ‘to construct its own reader’

Robert Fowler



'Mark's story of Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection is not meant to provide information about the life and death of Jesus so much as to proclaim the good news. It calls its hearers to be followers of the risen Jesus.'

Joanna Dewey





In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, 'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way – and some of them have come from a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?'

Mark 8:1-4

'Mark's Gospel is narrated in such a way that the reader often perceives and understands what characters in the story do not.'

Robert Fowler





The beginning of the good news of
Jesus Christ [the Messiah], the Son
of God.

Mark 1:1



In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

Mark 1:9-12

**'The baptism scene is directed
toward the reader.'**

Robert Fowler



'The interest of Mark's audience is maintained in large part by watching the disciples try to figure out what it already knows.'

Joanna Dewey



Characters speaking to readers

- a heavenly voice at Jesus' transfiguration: 'this is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him' (9:7)
- a Roman centurion at Jesus' crucifixion: 'truly this man was God's Son' (15:39)
- Jesus' predictions of his death (8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34)



'vast portions of the Gospel
function for the reader alone'

Robert Fowler



'No one in the story stayed awake and heard the prayer. The only faithful, wide-awake witness to Jesus' prayer is the reader. Only the reader of the storyteller's discourse has fulfilled the role of the faithful follower. The master storyteller craftily knits us into the fabric of his narrative at the same time that he unravels the disciples' role inside the story.'

Robert Fowler





When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.'

Mark 15:33-35

Thinking about the reader

Consider this quote by Fowler, which gives a good sense of his reader-centred interpretation: 'No one in the story stayed awake and heard the prayer. The only faithful, wide-awake witness to Jesus' prayer is the reader. Only the reader ... has fulfilled the role of the faithful follower. The master storyteller craftily knits us into the fabric of his narrative at the same time that he unravels the disciples' role inside the story.'

What, according to Fowler, does Mark's Gospel seek to do to us? How does Mark seek to draw us in? Are we allowing ourselves to be drawn in?

'Only the reader ... has fulfilled the role of the faithful follower.' What do you make of that?





2

A healing,
a misunderstanding,
and some discipleship
instructions
(Mark 8:22–9:1)



Bethsaida





They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village ...

Mark 8:22-23



(1) when he had **put saliva on his eyes** and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Can you see anything?' And the man looked up and said, 'I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.'

(2) Then **Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.** Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'

Mark 8:23-26

Around the Sea of Galilee (4:35–8:26)



Jesus' desire to reach out
to Gentiles

crossing Sea of Galilee
= crossing over into
Gentile territory

twice Jesus and disciples

are impeded by storms (4:35–41; 6:45–52)

faith in Gentile territory

trouble with authorities on Jewish side



Purity discussions and Gentile contacts (Mark 7)



disciples eat with dirty hands (7:2)

argument with Pharisees

Jesus explains to crowd (7:14-15)
and disciples (7:17-23) that nothing
outside a person makes them
unclean

narrator says Jesus declared all
foods clean (7:19)

at Tyre, Jesus engages with Gentile (Syrophoenician) woman
(7:26)

in Decapolis, he heals deaf man with speech impediment,
using saliva (7:31-37)



[the man] looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'

Mark 8:23-26

The 'messianic secret'

(William Wrede)

- Jesus silences the demons that acknowledge his power (1:34; 3:12)
- Jesus instructs people not to make his healing miracles public (1:43-45; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26)
- Jesus teaches his disciples in private (4:34; 7:17-23; 9:28; 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34; 13:3)
- Jesus commands the disciples to be silent (8:30; 9:9)
- Jesus uses parables to obscure his message so that outsiders don't understand it (4:10-13)





Caesarea Philippi





Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah' [ὁ Χριστός, 'the Christ']. And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Mark 8:27-30



They should not depart from any counsel of the law in order to walk in complete stubbornness of their heart, but instead shall be ruled by the first directives which the men of the Community began to be taught until the prophet comes, and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.

1QS 9:7-11



Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly.

Mark 8:31-32



And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke [ἐπιτιμάω, epitimao] him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Mark 8:32-33

Thinking about Jesus as Messiah and Suffering Servant

What does it mean that Jesus is not only the Messiah but also the Suffering Servant who endures suffering and rejection?

What might this mean for his disciples'/the church's role and mission in the world today? What does it not mean?



Discipleship in Mark 8:22-10:52

Healing of blind man (8:22-26)

Additional material (8:27-30)

1. Passion prediction - misunderstanding -
discipleship instructions (8:31-9:1)

Additional material (9:2-29)

2. Passion prediction - misunderstanding (x2) -
discipleship instructions (x2) (9:30-50)

Additional material (10:1-31)

3. Passion prediction - misunderstanding -
discipleship instructions (10:32-45)

Healing of blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52)





Do you have eyes, and fail to see?

Mark 8:18



Make the mind of this people dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes,
so that they may not look with their
eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed.

Isaiah 6:10

The blind man and the disciples

(Tom Wright)

Blind Man (8:22–26)

- taken away from the village by Jesus
- sees people who look like walking trees
- sight has been fully restored
- told not to enter the village



Disciples (8:27–30)

- taken away from the lake and crowds by Jesus
- crowds see Jesus only as a prophet
- disciples' eyes are opened so they recognise Jesus as Messiah
- told not to tell anyone



The blind man and the disciples

(alternative reading)

Blind Man (8:22–26)

- taken away from the village by Jesus
- is beginning to see
- sees people as though they are walking trees
- sight is fully restored

Disciples (8:27–30)

- taken away from the crowds by Jesus
- recognise Jesus as the Messiah
- don't understand that the Messiah must suffer
- only fully understand after Jesus' death and resurrection

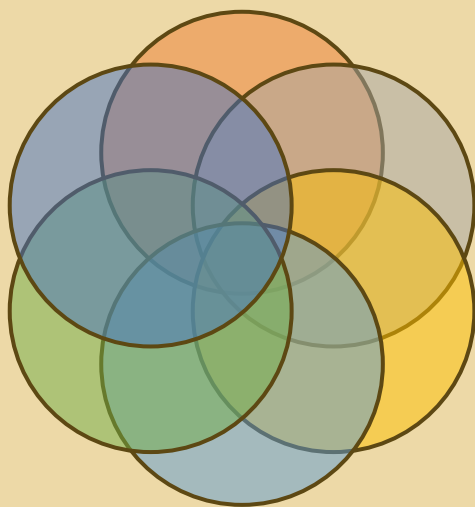


Discipleship instructions (Mark 8:34–9:1)

Some will not
taste death until
they see that the
kingdom of God
has come with
power.

Jesus and the
Son of Man.

Jesus called the
crowd with his
disciples.



Take up the cross
– and challenge
Roman authority?

The divide
between those
who are
prepared to
follow on the
way of suffering
and those who
are not.

Disowning
oneself – or
Jesus (see Mark
14:30–31, 72)?

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.'

Thinking about blindness – and our mission in this world

What do you make of the disciples' spiritual blindness in Mark's Gospel? What did that entail? What did they not understand? How do we understand Jesus today? Might we be blind to some aspects of his self-understanding, ministry, and mission (and thus his vision for us)? In what areas might our eyes need to be opened?

What about the suggestion that taking up the cross means challenging Roman authority? Why did that need to be challenged? What might that mean for us and the church today?



3

A classical painting showing a close-up of a hand resting on an open book. A quill pen is in an inkwell to the left. The scene is dimly lit, with the light focused on the book and the hand. The background is dark and indistinct.

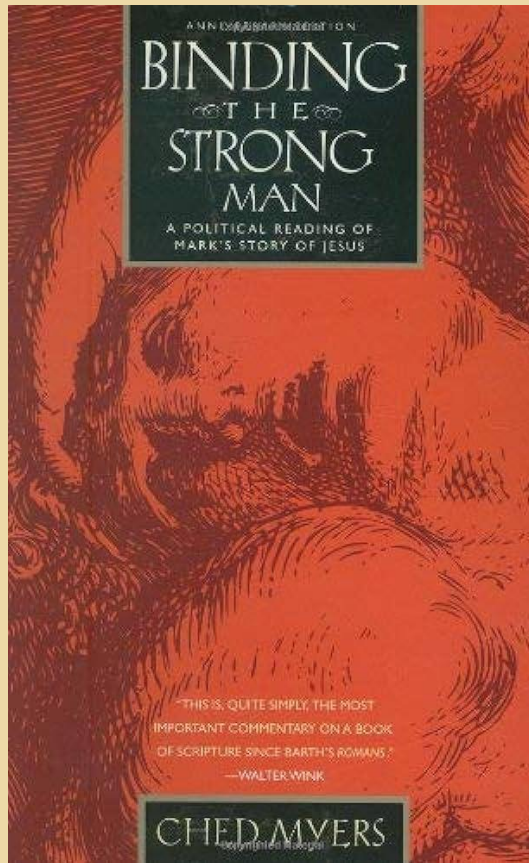
Reading Mark
politically

Political interpretation

- 'political' < πόλις (polis): city, state, public sphere
- interested in the text's public and social significance
- sociopolitical, socioeconomic readings
- note, e.g., Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Pentateuch on sharing of the land, etc.
- 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18)
- focus on 'God's attentiveness to the poor; the prophetic insistence upon social justice; and the vocation of the Church to stand in solidarity with the marginalized' (Ched Myers)



Myers, 'Binding the Strong Man'



Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (1988, 2nd edn 2008)



‘Everyone can point to an event that has changed their lives forever. Encountering *Binding the Strong Man* was such an event for me. It caused a seismic shift in my thinking and forever changed the direction of my life’s vocation.’

Obery Hendricks

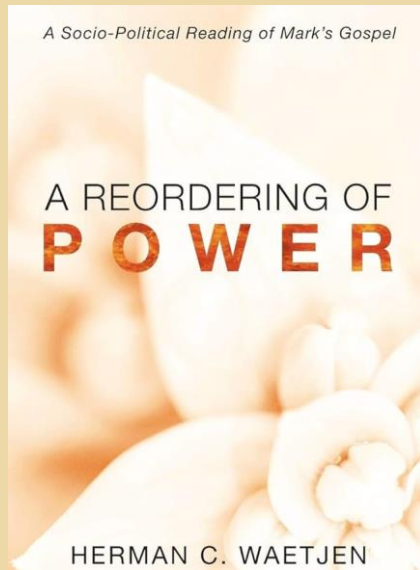


'Ched Myers's revolutionary reading of the Gospel of Mark revealed to me a depth and breadth of political radicality in Jesus' message and ministry beyond anything I had imagined. For the first time I truly understood that when Jesus talked about bringing good news, he really meant it! [...] From *Binding the Strong Man* I learned to look for political meaning in every biblical passage, especially in the Gospels.'

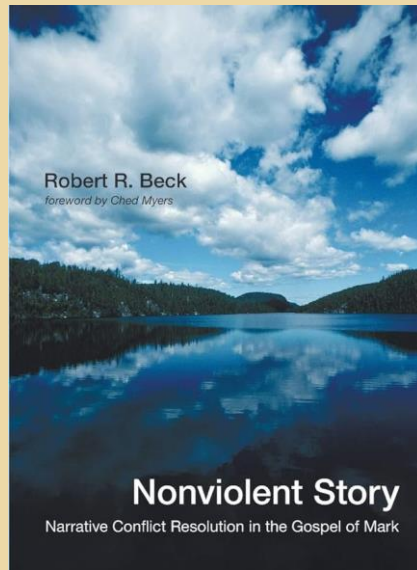
Obery Hendricks



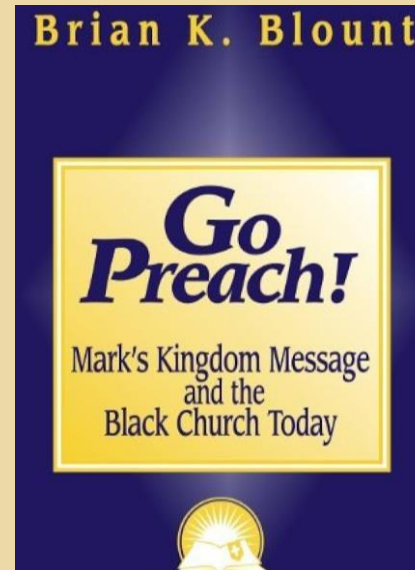
Political interpretation of Mark



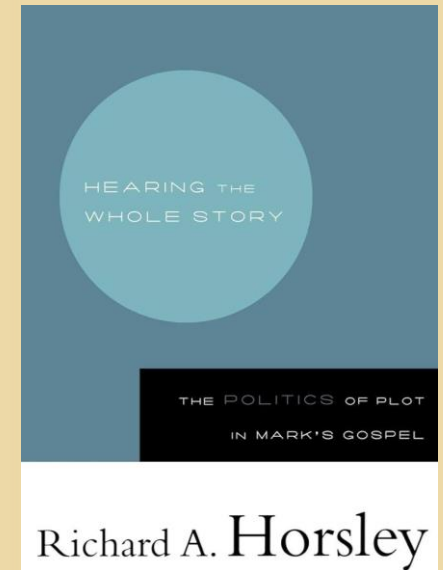
Herman Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-political Reading of Mark's Gospel* (1989).



Robert Beck, *Nonviolent Story: Narrative Conflict Resolution in the Gospel of Mark* (1996).



Brian Blount, *Go Preach! Mark's Kingdom Message and the Black Church Today* (1998).



Richard Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (2001).

‘Our life situation will necessarily determine the questions we bring to the text, and hence strongly influence what it says and means to us ... the text maintains its own integrity ... we owe it to ourselves and the text to try to enter into its world as much as possible.’

Ched Myers



Mark's Gospel 'was written to help imperial subjects learn the hard truth about their world and themselves. ... His is a story by, about, and for those committed to God's work of justice, compassion, and liberation in the world.'

Ched Myers



Competing ideologies

- Roman colonialism
 - Roman propaganda aimed to justify Rome's right to rule
 - Herodians
 - Sadducees
- Renewal movements of reform and withdrawal
 - Pharisees: reform society by returning to traditional values of Torah
 - Essenes: reformist agenda, withdrawal from public life
- Radicalism
 - Zealots: restore traditional values by radical, militaristic means



Jesus 'invoke[ed] the Deuteronomic vision of a just redistributive system, and appeal[ed] to the subversive tradition of the great prophetic social critics of Israel. ... What Jesus had in view was much more far-reaching – essentially a new kind of human community, not based on violence, debt or exclusion' – the Kingdom of God.

Ched Myers



'Mark demonstrates a keen awareness of [the] prophetic legacy of opposition to the powerful ..., using it as a kind of biblical "script" for interpreting the vocation of Jesus.'

Ched Myers





As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

Mark 13:1-2

Contested readings of scripture

- 'Have you never read what David did ...?' (2:25)
- 'Have you not read this scripture ...?' (12:10)
- 'Have you not read in the book of Moses ...?' (12:26)



Abolishment of purity rules

- profusion of purity rules and difficulty of observing them marginalized the masses, who could not afford the outlay of time, money, or goods for frequent ritual cleansing processes (Aharon Oppenheimer)
- for Jesus' radical challenge of purity code, see esp. Mark 7:1-23
- miracles demonstrate Jesus healing those excluded and labelled unclean (Jeffrey John)
- note also Jesus' inclusion of Gentiles



Reading Mark politically

Should we read Mark's Gospel/the Bible politically, i.e., as applying to social realities then and now? What difference does that make? What did Jesus' use of the term 'kingdom of God' entail?

Why did Jesus challenge and indeed abolish the traditional Jewish purity rules and taboos? What would that have meant for the people at the time? Are we, in the church, now free of purity thinking, or are there situations when that still rears its head? What might Jesus' rejection of that purity thinking mean for us today?



Structure of Mark's Gospel

Book I
1:1-8:21
Galilee

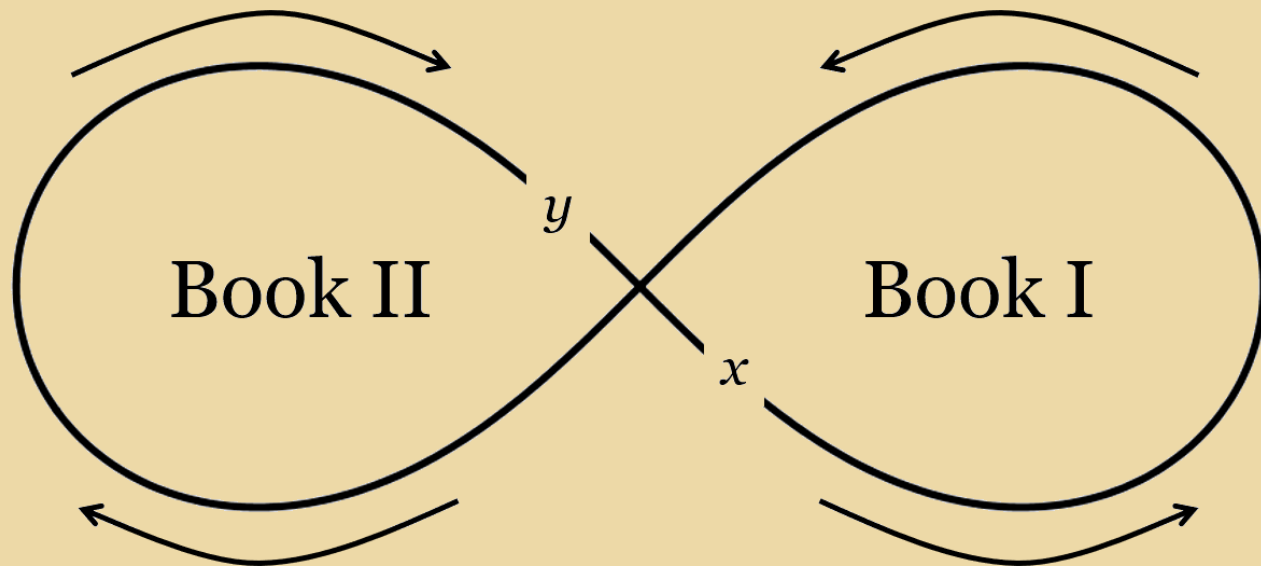
8:22-26

Book II
8:27-16:8
Journey from
Galilee to
Jerusalem



Structure of Mark's Gospel

16:7 'Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.'

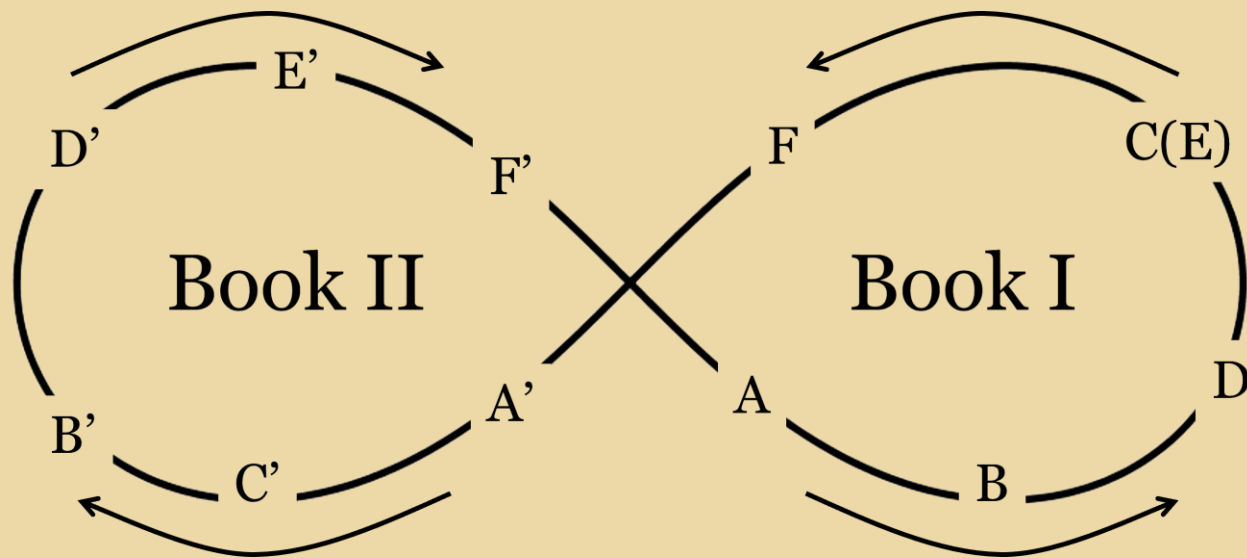


Structure of Mark's Gospel

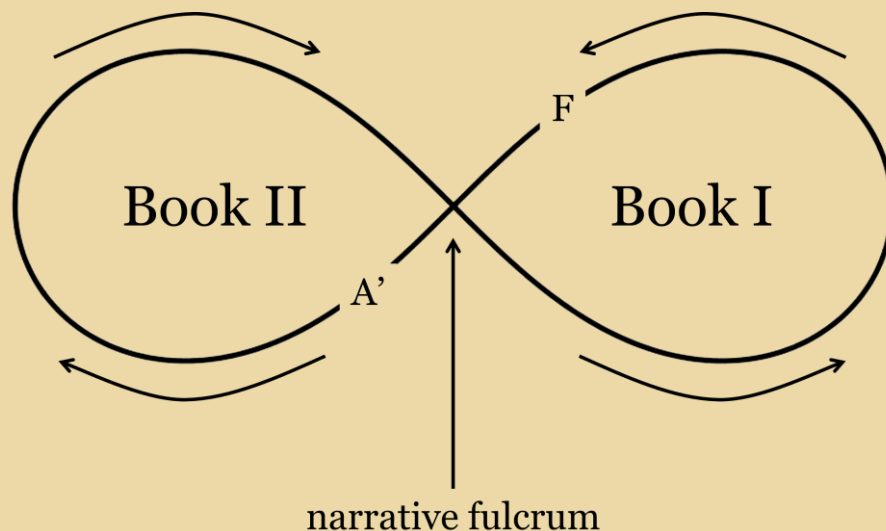
Narrative Theme	Book I	Book II
A. Prologue/call to discipleship	1:1-20	8:27-9:13
B. Campaign of direct action	1:21-3:35	11:1-13:3
C. Construction of new order	4:35-8:10	8:22-26; 9:14-10:52
D. Extended sermon	4:1-34	13:4-37
E. 'Passion' tradition	6:14-29	14:1-15:38
F. Symbolic epilogue	8:11-21	15:39-16:8



Structure of Mark's Gospel



Structure of Mark's Gospel



8:14-21 (F, epilogue of Book I)	conversations between Jesus and the disciples/the reader of Mark's Gospel	'Do you not yet understand?' (8:21)
8:27-33 (A', prologue of Book II)		'Who do you say that I am?' (8:29)



Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. ... He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Mark 8:31-34*

'The call to the cross is thus established as the ideological center of the narrative, the "fulcrum" upon which the whole story balances'.



Narrative analysis

(A. J. Greimas)

Greimas

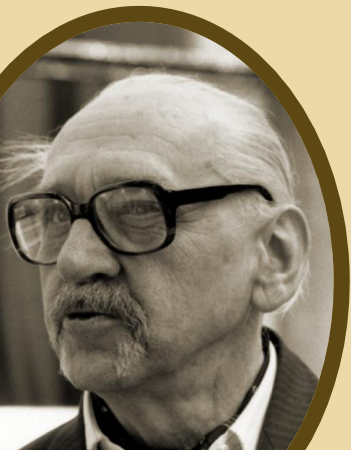
- | |
|--|
| 1. mandate |
| 2. acceptance or rejection
of mandate |
| 3. confrontation |
| 4. success or failure |
| 5. consequence or
attribution |



Jesus' mission

(A. J. Greimas and Ched Myers)

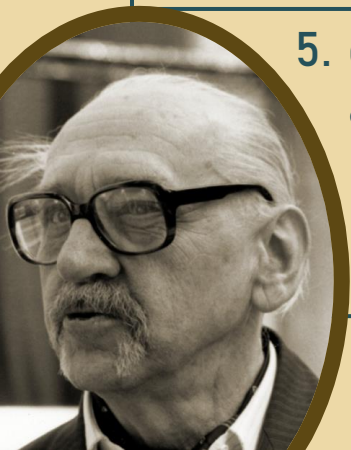
Greimas	Jesus' mission
1. mandate	messianic mandate received and accepted at Jesus' baptism
2. acceptance or rejection of mandate	
3. confrontation	with religious and political leaders
4. success or failure	cross as success
5. consequence or attribution	Jesus reliably attributed to be the Messiah



Confronting the old order

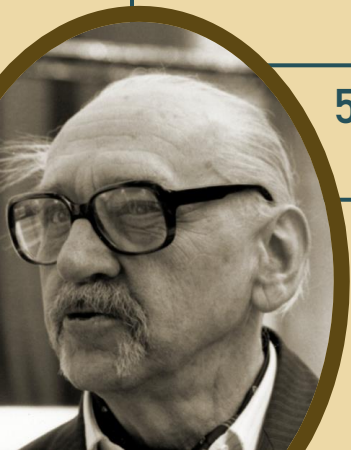
(A. J. Greimas and Ched Myers)

Greimas	1. Confronting the old order (religious leaders)
1. mandate	religious leaders to choose justice and compassion over domination (3:4)
2. acceptance or rejection of mandate	immediately and repeatedly rejected in several confrontations (3:6; 6:26; 11:27-33; 12:13; 14:1-2)
3. confrontation	
4. success or failure	Jesus silences them (12:34) – but is eventually executed
5. consequence or attribution	they will behold the Son of Man to their shame (15:29-39; cf. 8:29-30; 14:62); cross seals the doom of the leaders' domain (15:38)



Constructing alternative order (A. J. Greimas and Ched Myers)

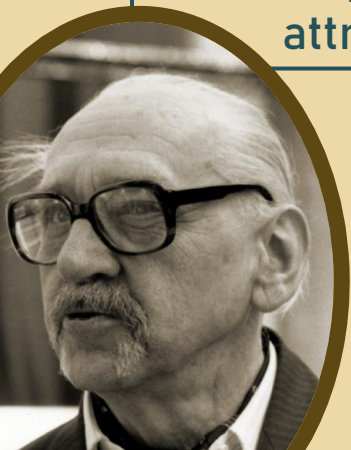
Greimas	2. Constructing an alternative order (disciples, messianic community)
1. mandate	disciples to carry out work of kingdom (1:17; 3:14; 6:7)
2. acceptance or rejection of mandate	rejected when revealed to be the way of the cross
3. confrontation	several confrontations (6:53; 8:17ff.; 8:33, etc.)
4. success or failure	disciples don't follow Jesus to the cross (14:50-51)
5. consequence or attribution	as Jesus lives, the discipleship adventure continues (16:6-7)



Bringing Liberation

(A. J. Greimas and Ched Myers)

Greimas		3. Bringing liberation (crowds, people)
1. mandate		healing, exorcism, and liberation
2. acceptance or rejection of mandate		crowds initially acknowledge Jesus' authority (1:22) and appears to have accepted his mandate for a new social order (11:9-10), only to reject him in the end (15:6-15)
3. confrontation		
4. success or failure		liberation fails
5. consequence or attribution		crowd remains under control of those who dominate it (15:11)



'In the final scenes of the story we see the defecting disciples (2), the disillusioned crowd (3), and the hostile authorities (1), all juxtaposed to Jesus, who alone goes the way of the cross.'

Ched Myers



Thinking about Mark's structure

What might Myers' analysis of Mark's structure mean for how we read and engage with the text? Do we read in a way that allows us to understand not only individual passages but Mark's Gospel as a whole? What might be holding us back? How can we change this?

And what about Myers' Greimasian analysis of different people's/groups' actions in Mark's Gospel? What did you think of his findings? Do you think this could be a useful tool for engaging with the text? Would you be interested in re-reading Mark with Myers' findings in mind?



4

The beginning
(1:1–20) and
the endings(s)
(16:1–8 (20?))





The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight"',

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Mark 1:1-13



Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark 1:14-20

A bold claim

'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah ...' (1:1-2)

- the canon of authoritative scripture had been closed!



'The old order – its definitions of sacred space, social status, and cultic/political authority – is confronted and subverted through the narrative vehicle of conflict and exorcism stories. The new order – its imperatives of inclusivity, equality, servanthood, and suffering patience – is mediated through stories of conversion, miracles and healing, symbolic action, and parenetic teaching.'

Ched Myers



Apocalypticism: 'combat myth'

- And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. (1:12-13)
- And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. (3:23-27)
- Jesus' speech about the destruction of the temple, the ensuing persecution, and the coming of the Human One (13:1-37); who is 'lord' of the 'house' (13:35)?



Implications of Mark 1:1

‘The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’

- ‘the beginning’ (ἀρχὴ, archē, 1:1),
see ‘in the beginning’ (ἀρχὴ, archē, Gen. 1:1 LXX)
‘a story about a new heaven and new earth’
- ‘gospel/good news’ (εὐαγγέλιον, euangelion)
a Roman political term subverted

Jesus is an ‘anointed’ leader, who is confirmed by the Deity and proclaims a ‘kingdom’





As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" ...
(Mark 1:2-3)

Mark 1:2-3
(Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3)

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the LORD whom you seek will suddenly **come to his temple**.
(Mal. 3:1)

A voice cries out: '**In the wilderness** prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God'.
(Isa. 40:3)



In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

(Isa. 2:2-3)

And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to [John the Baptist], and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

(Mark 1:5)

Isa. 2:2-3 vs Mark 1:5

Jesus' humble, peripheral roots

- 'In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan' (1:9)
- 'In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan' (1:14)
- other references to Nazareth: 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6
- Galilee: populated heavily by gentiles, predominantly poor, geopolitically cut off from Judea/Jerusalem



Apocalyptic battle for history

- Jesus' clash with Satan in the wilderness (1:12-13)
- Jesus' confrontations with demons
- Jesus' contest for authority with the scribes and Pharisees
- parable about binding the strong man (Satan) (3:23-30)
- Jesus announces the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God (1:15)



Thinking about Mark's prologue

What do you make of the apocalyptic elements of Mark's prologue: the spirit descending upon Jesus, the voice from heaven, the spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness, Satan, the wild beasts, the angels, the kingdom of God, the disciples as the new troops? What kind of story is Mark about to tell?

What is the significance of Mark connecting his story with the Old Testament?

What about the gospel/kingdom of God as countering Roman claims? What might that mean for us today?

And what about that kingdom emerging from the wilderness/margins rather than from Jerusalem, the religious centre? Again, what might be the significance of that for us today?



Mark's ending(s)

- 16:8
+ shorter ending
(1 manuscript only)
- 16:8 + vv. 9–20
(longer ending)
- 16:8
- 16:8
+ shorter ending
+ vv. 9–20 (longer
ending)
- 'Amen' after
shorter ending
- additional
paragraph
after v. 14
- parts of that
paragraph
after v. 14
- 'Amen' after
v. 20





When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Mark 16:1-8:

The shortest 'non'-ending



[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

Mark 16 after v. 8:
The 'shorter' ending

τοῦ μνημείου· 4 ἡ ἀναβλέψασαι θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἡ ἀποκεκύλισται ὁ λίθος· ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα·.

5 Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν. 6 ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς· μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε· Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον· ἡγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. 7 ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἰπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι ἔπροάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς ἔειπεν ὑμῖν.

8 Καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις· καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. τ

Mt 27,60
9,3 Act 1,10; 10,30

14.28 p

[[¹τ Πάντα δὲ τὰ παρηγγελμένα τοῖς περὶ τὸν Πέτρον συντόμως ἐξήγγειλαν. Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τ ἀπὸ ἡ ἀνατολῆς ὁ¹ καὶ ἡ ἄχρι δύσεως ἐξαπέστειλεν δι' αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα τῆς αἰωνίου σωτηρίας. ὁ² ἀμήν.]]

4 ἦν γὰρ μεγ. σφ. καὶ ἐρχονται καὶ εὐρισκούςιν ἀποκεκυλισμένον τὸν λίθον D Θ 565 c ff² n (sy^s); (Eus) | τ ἀνακ- (N) B L 2427 | txt A C W Ψ f^{1,13} 33 M • 5 ἡ ἐλθ- B 2427 • 6 τ N* D | εἰδετε ἐκεῖ τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ D(*) (c ff²) | εἰδετε· ἐκεῖ ὁ τόπος αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν W (Θ 565) • 7 ἡ γερθη ἀπὸ νεκρῶν καὶ ἰδου προαγεί f¹ pc | ἰδου προαγῶ et¹ με et¹ εἰρηκα D k • 8 ἡ κακούσασαι Θ (565) | καὶ ἀκούσασαι ἐξηλθον καὶ W (099) sy^s.(p.hmg) | φοβος D W pc it sa^{ms} | k | τ [[¹ Πάντα δε ... σωτηρίας. ἀμην]] add. k | [[¹ Πάντα δε ... σωτηρίας. ἀμην]] et [[² Ἀναστάς δε ... σημειῶν (= 16,9-20)]] add. L Ψ 083. 099. 274^{mg}. 579. / 1602 sy^{hmg} sa^{mss} bo^{mss} aeth^{mss} | [[² Ἀναστάς δε ... σημειῶν (= 16,9-20)]] add. A C D W Θ f¹³ 33. 2427 M lat syc.p.h bo; Ir^{lat} Eus^{mss} Hier^{mss} (add. cum obel. f¹ al) | nihil hab. N B 304 sy^s sa^{ms} arm^{mss}; Eus Eus^{mss} Hier^{mss}

Ad [[¹ Πάντα ... σωτηρίας. ἀμην]]: om. N A B C D W Θ f^{1,13} 33. 2427 M lat sy sa^{ms} bo | txt L Ψ 083. 099. 274^{mg}. 579. / 1602 k sy^{hmg} sa^{mss} bo^{mss} aeth^{mss} | τ Φερεται πού καὶ ταῦτα: L sy^{hmg} | Ἐν τισὶν ἀντιγραφῶν ταῦτα φερεται· 099 sa^{ms} | Ἐν ἀλλοῖς ἀντιγραφοῖς οὐκ ἐγραφή ταῦτα· / 1602 | ο Ψ 083 | τ ἐφάνη Ψ / 1602 k | ἐφάνη αὐτοῖς 099 sa^{mss} bo^{mss} aeth^{mss} | ἡ ἀνατολῶν 274^{mg} | ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου 099 sa^{mss} aeth^{mss} | ο¹ 083 k sy^{hmg} sa^{mss} bo^{mss} | τ μεχρι Ψ | ο² L bo^{mss} | txt Ψ 083. 099. 274^{mg}. 579. / 1602 k sy^{hmg} sa^{mss} bo^{ms}

Mark's shorter ending (Novum Testamentum Graece²⁷)

Omitted by

κ, A, B, C, D, W,
Θ, f^{1,13}, 33, 2427,
M, lat, sy, sa^{ms},
bo

Included in

L, Ψ, 083, 099,
274^{mg}, 579, / 1602,
k, sy^{hmg}, sa^{mss},
bo^{mss}, aeth^{mss}



[[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.]]

Mark 16:9–20:
The 'longer' ending

An unfinished sentence?

- ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (ephobounto gar)
- 'they were afraid that ...'



Mark ends at 16:8

Contra

- 'it is hard to imagine a Gospel that begins with a bold, resounding announcement of divine Sonship (1:1) ending on a note of fear and panic (16:8)' (Edwards)
- the story demands an appearance of the risen Christ, since the women are told in 16:7 that they will see him in Galilee

Pro

- such an ending 'is thoroughly consistent with the motifs of astonishment and fear developed throughout the Gospel' (Lane)
- the missing reference to an appearance of the risen Lord is 'entirely in keeping with the method [Mark] uses throughout the gospel to leave his readers to make the crucial step of faith for themselves' (Hooker)



An unfinished sentence?

- ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (ephobounto gar)
- 'they were afraid that ...'
- 'they were afraid you see' (Williams)



Don't tell anyone!

- 'he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him' (1:34)
- the healed leper must not say anything to anyone (1:44)
- note the same instruction in connection with other miracles (e.g., 3:12; 7:36; 8:26)
- when Peter recognises Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus orders the disciples not to tell anyone (8:29-30)
- after his transfiguration, Jesus insists that the disciples must not tell anyone about what they had seen until after the resurrection (9:9)



Go ... tell!

‘Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’

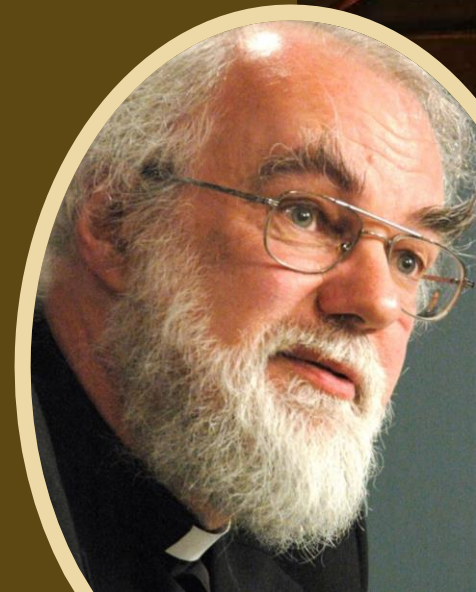
So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

(Mark 16:7-8)



'Once it was a matter of how easy it would have been to tell the story of Jesus the great healer and wonderworker; all the words were there, ready-made – which is why Jesus tells the witnesses not to use them. Now something has been made clear that has no ready-made words: God has acted in the pain and failure of Jesus and in his torture and execution. Just how are we to talk about that?'

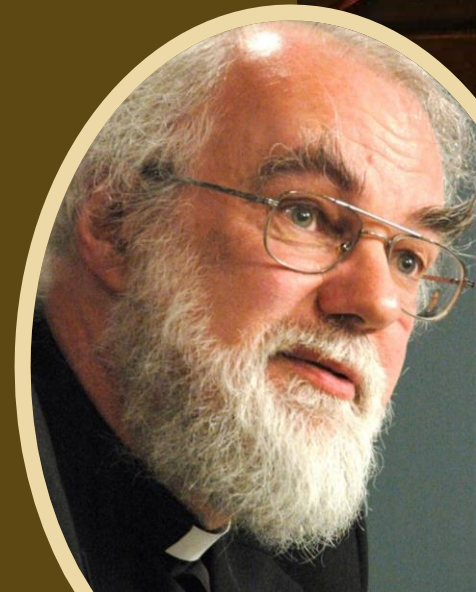
Rowan Williams



‘Don’t think too quickly that
you’ve got the measure of this.’

‘Jesus changes for ever what
we can say about God’.

Rowan Williams



Thinking about Mark's ending(s)

Do you think Mark meant to end his Gospel with the women fleeing and not saying anything to anyone? Or do you think the original ending must have got lost? Why?

What do you make of Rowan Williams' suggestion that, while it's easy to talk about Jesus the great healer and wonderworker, it's much harder to talk about God acting in Jesus' pain, failure, torture, and execution? What do you think Williams might be driving at here?

