

BRIEF THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND *(continued)*:

Mark's Gospel is not an historical narrative to introduce a timeline of an historical Jesus. It is already more than thirty years since the resurrection. Most likely his readers/hearers are already familiar with some of the Apostle Paul's letters, and the resurrected Christ. Mark's Gospel is written in parabolic style where every section has a deeper meaning than the words within it. Mark's aim is to proclaim the "Son of Man" who brings about God's Kingdom on earth, and the desire that all would follow him in the "Way." It is also a testament against the rule of "empire" over the poor and disenfranchised.

Mark's tension of holding both the "Son of Man" (coming in clouds of glory) and Man of Sorrows (passive, silent victim of abuse, false accusation and crucifixion) is never resolved in his story. Both are necessary to Mark's Gospel. The resurrection does not do away with the suffering of the crucifixion. The suffering of Jesus is as profound as God's vindication in the resurrection.

Nothing in Mark's Gospel suggests any of Jesus' disciples are capable of faithfulness, even the women at the tomb. It is the faithfulness of Jesus that pulls us into his orbit; calls us to follow, follow to the cross, if necessary, through death and resurrection and back to Galilee to continue his ministry again, and again.

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FURTHER STUDY:

A. Scriptures (parallel Gospel accounts):

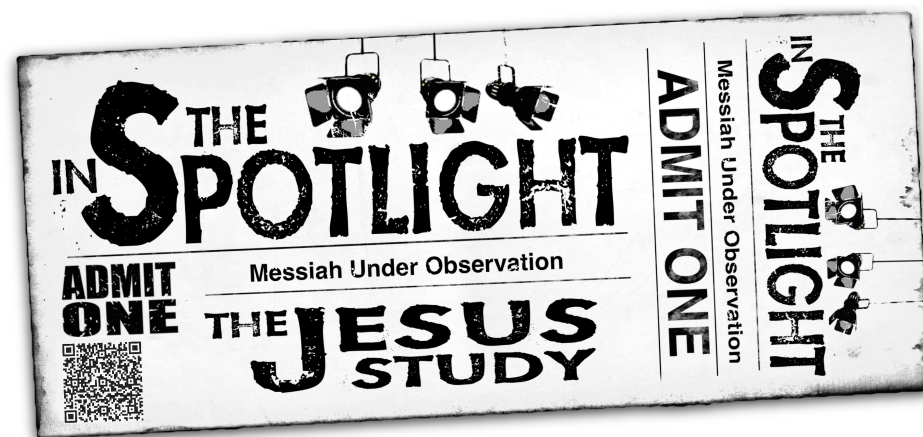
Matthew 27:62-66; Matthew 28:1-20

Luke 24:1-53

John 20 & 21

B. Suggested Reference Materials:

"Practicing the Way" by John Mark Comer



LESSON #23

"The Neverending Story"

Mark 16:1-8

Focus Scripture:

Mark 16:7

"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."

Food for Thought

People react in different ways when confronted with confusing circumstances. How do you handle situations beyond your comprehension... fear, silence, outcry, laughter?



Vocabulary Definitions:

Anastasis (Greek, ἀνάστασις): Resurrection

BRIEF CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Mark's Gospel is written in story form, however, each part is representative of a lesson, or parable, explaining who Jesus is and what is his mission. He tells us from the start that Jesus has brought the Kingdom of God into our midst, and then proceeds to tell us what that looks like. Mark's Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man," referencing Daniel 7, and the vision of a "Son of Man" being given authority over the cosmos and coming with power and glory to redeem the Earth. This is proven with signs of healing and exorcisms. All four Gospels claim Jesus was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again, however, each of their stories has different details of time and events. Mark's story of the resurrection continues in the manner of the rest of his Gospel. It is a story with parabolic meaning. This does not mean it is simply a parable, but that there is "truth" in the story beyond the words. As pastor and theologian Alan Story says, "I don't know if it happened that way, but I know it's true." Therefore, to get the most out of it, we need to focus on how the details tell Mark's story that Jesus calls us into the drama, and calls us to follow him on the Way. That having been said, let's let Mark tell us his account of the resurrection story.

Scene at the Tomb

THE STAGE: Read Mark 16:1-8 in Greek historic present tense, meant to draw the reader/hearer into the present time of the story. We, too, become witnesses and participants in the story:

16¹ Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ²Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³And they say among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" ⁴But looking up, they see that the stone is rolled away—for it is very large. ⁵And entering the tomb, they see a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they are amazed.

⁶And he says to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who is crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

⁸So they go quickly and flee from the tomb, for they are seized with trembling and amazement. And they say nothing to anyone, for they are afraid.

1. What day is it?
2. What time of day is it?
3. Who are our actors?
4. Besides the women, who is mentioned by name?

THE SCRIPT:

1. Recalling Mark's Gospel was written around 70CE, and Paul began his ministry around 33CE, what might we surmise about Mark's audience, and their knowledge of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection?
2. Why do you think Mark specifically mentions Peter?
3. Why do you think Mark's wants to draw us into the scene, by his use of Greek historic present tense?
4. The "Young Man in white" (*Matthew, Luke and John use "angels"*)
 - a. Where else is a young man and his clothing mentioned in Mark's story (Mk 14:51-52)?
 - b. If Mark's details are rife with meaning, and his is the only Gospel with a "young man dressed in white" instead of angel, how might this be Mark's signature and testimony, and a picture of his own redemption? (*this being merely conjecture on our part*).
 - c. The young man offers three "commands" and information to the women. What does he say about why they are there, and what has happened, and what are the three things he tells them to do?
5. Mark maintains tension between the Suffering of Jesus and the Risen Christ. Why is it necessary to hold both simultaneously?
6. What are the women instructed to tell the other disciples, and what is the promise to them?
7. Where has Jesus gone ahead of them? Where was Jesus at the start of his ministry?
8. The story ends abruptly. It ends with even the women being confused and not understanding. Why do you think Mark would end his story there?

THE REVIEWS:

1. For your own story, how is this ending an invitation to finish your story joining Jesus where it all began, continuing your own narrative, following "the Way," and participating in resurrection ministry?
2. Mark doesn't describe Jesus as being "with" you, rather he goes "ahead" of you. What does that mean to you personally?

BRIEF THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND:

Some thoughts from other theologians:

"The time comes to speak in faith, and the proclaimers are muted by fear."^[1]

"With Jesus, the crucified-risen Christ, God's kindom has secretly exploded into this world."^[1]

Jesus is described not as "being with" you, but "going ahead" of you. "If this is true, then death is stripped of its power. There is nothing a follower of Jesus will endure, no place they can go, that Jesus isn't already there."^[2]