

- Mark's gospel ends abruptly in silence and fear (16:8). No one has seen the risen Jesus or passed on the news of the empty tomb.
- There are two alternative endings given in most modern translations. There is a shorter one with flowing language ('imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation') and a longer one v9-20 which seems to be a summary of the other three gospel resurrection accounts – v9f and 14 (see John 20), v1-14, 19 (see Luke 24), v15 (see Matthew 28).
- Neither 'sounds' like Mark and both were probably composed sometime in the 2nd Century in different places and by those who found the original ending unsatisfactory!
- Some say the abrupt ending fits in with the rest of the gospel leaving the hearer/reader to make their own response. Other say something was lost. Who knows?

Names and Titles

- Teacher (Master) (4:38; 5:35; 9:17,38; 10:17,20,35, 51; 12:14,19,32; 13:1; 14:14)
- Rabbi (9:5; 11:21; 14:45)
- Prophet (6:15; 8:28 and perhaps 6:4; 11:32)
- Lord/lord (2:28; 5:19; 7:28; 11:3,9-10)
- Christ (1:1; 9:41)
- Messiah (8:29; 14:61; 15:32)
- King of the Jews (15:2,8,12,18,26)
- Son of David (10:47,48)
- Son of Mary (6:3)

Son of Man (2:10,28; 8:31,38; 9:9,12,31; 10:33,45,48; 13:24,26; 14:21,41,62)

- Key title in Mark's Gospel.
- Does it relate to the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7? - an exalted figure whose dominion will never pass away, a kingdom that will not be destroyed. Is there a connection to the use of "Son of Man" in Psalm 8?

- In Aramaic “Son of Man” could simply be a way of saying “I” or “someone in my position”. Could it be an encapsulation of Mark’s view of Jesus as one who is exalted but simultaneously meek?

Son of God

- ‘Son of God’ is perhaps the most significant title for Jesus in Mark’s gospel (1:1, 11; 9:7; 14:61f, 15:39). Like the word ‘gospel’ it has echoes with the OT and the Greco-Roman world.
- In the OT Solomon will be God’s son in Nathan’s prophecy to David (2 Sa. 7:12-14). In the king the relationship between God and his people is embodied. The nation is God’s son (Ex.4: 22f; Hos.11:1) and thus so is the king (Ps. 2:7; 89:26f) – ‘the nations privilege and responsibility focus on him’ Proctor). To call Jesus the ‘Son of God’ is to tap into all that tradition of a royal personage through whom God’s rule and reign will be known.
- In the Roman world, some emperors liked to be seen and worshipped as divine. Inscriptions on coins and monuments would often emphasis it even for those who didn’t. To name Jesus as ‘Son of God’ went against all expectations. What sort of king would go to the cross? - a ‘servant king’ in a world where kings exemplified wealth and prestige.
- On the cross this king will represent Israel’s life before God, suffer for her and bring hope for the future.

Recognising Jesus

- Jesus is acclaimed by heaven at his baptism (1:11) and at the transfiguration (9:7) and even the demons know him (1:24; 5:7). Yet for the humans in the story that is not always the case. In the parable of the sower and explanation Jesus will say of some:

‘they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.’” (4:12)

- Even the disciples struggle to understand who Jesus is (4:41; 6:52; 8:14-21) until the cross (15:39).
- Sometimes Jesus seeks to hide his identity:
 - He silences the demons (1:25; 34; 3:11f).
 - Some healings take place in private (5:40; 7:33; 8:23).
 - He tells those he heals not to tell anyone (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26).
 - He teaches the disciples in private (4:10-12; 4:33f; 7:17; 9:28; 10:10; 13:3) and tells them not to pass on what they know about him (8:30; 9:9).
 - The times Jesus seeks to get away and lie low (1:35; 6:31; 6:46; 7:24; 8:10; 9:2,30)
- Examination of these texts led to the theory of ‘The Messianic Secret’ by William Wrede in 1901 - to explain why Jesus is secretive in Mark’s Gospel.

- Wrede considered that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, was not recognised as such by the disciples during his life but only so after the resurrection.
- Subsequent Biblical studies have examined the theory in detail and asked lots of questions. How much of this was down to Jesus himself, or Mark as 'editor' and if the latter why did Mark do it?
- John Proctor summarises this very well:
 First Jesus was often mysterious about his identity. When he used the title 'Son of Man' about himself did he mean anyone or someone or was he referring back to the glorious figure of Daniel 7.
 Second, Jesus wanted to avoid the wrong response until he drew near to Jerusalem where he could assert his authority and get drawn into a debate about who he is (see 14:61f and the trial).
 Third Mark weaves these texts in as he shapes the Gospel – 'It pushes the great moment of revelation forward through the gospel to the cross – that is where Jesus is most truly understood , not only in his own time, but in the faith of the church'.

Finally let me leave you with these thoughts J C Ryle first published as Expository thoughts on Mark' in 1857 – Says it all really.....

And now let us close the pages of St. Mark's Gospel with self-inquiry and self-examination. Let it not content us to have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, the things here written for our learning about Jesus Christ. Let us ask ourselves whether we know anything of Christ "dwelling in our hearts by faith?" Does the Spirit "witness with our spirit" that Christ is our's and we are His? Can we really say that we are "living the life of faith in the Son of God," and that we have found by experience that Christ is "precious" to our own souls? These are solemn questions. They demand serious consideration. May we never rest till we can give them satisfactory answers! "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 12.)