



5 REASONS to study Mark 5-8

It may seem strange to ask why we study the central portion of the most read gospel in Poynton parish. However it is always a good idea to ask why. And in Poynton we are studying the middle chapters of Mark for 5 good reasons:

ONE Mark's gospel is the shortest of the four authoritative gospels. It has a good balance of teaching and action. Therefore it is an excellent choice for the first Bible book to be read by a newcomer to Christianity, and forms the backbone to our Christianity Explored and Baptism Preparation courses. If we get to know Mark, we are all in a better place to help newcomers.

TWO It shows us a fascinating window onto Jesus' priorities at the height of his Galilee ministry. By his repeated claims, subtle or less subtle (6:40,41-42, 46, 48), and his increasing frustration at his disciples' slowness to realize who he was claiming to be (8:17-21), and also by the conscious culmination of this section by the question: 'who do you say that I am?' (8:27-30), Jesus has the main aim of helping his followers to acknowledge that he is the Christ, the Son of God, God's king of all people for all time.

This section of Mark helps us to respond to Jesus' first main aim for people: understand Jesus to be who he claims to be, and speak it out.



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THREE This section witnesses an awful murder which helps Jesus realize his own terrible suffering may be closer than he thought. John the Baptist's death would have sent a shudder down Jesus' spine and helped him sharpen his priorities for the time he still had left:

- Training the twelve
- Concentrating on the Jews
- Showing them all who he was

FOUR We see Jesus enacting a conscious training programme for the twelve. He sent them out two by two (6:7). They had a feedback session (6:30) which Jesus sought to extend. He involved them in the leading of the crowds (6:37-43). He warned them about the strong influences opposing them (8:15). He was ready to tell them what would happen to him all too soon (8:31-32). From Mark, it is good to understand how Jesus offered regular training in discipleship so that we might seek good training in Christian discipleship.

FIVE Even though Jesus had a clear strategy, which he stuck to, he also had time for needy people, including many deserving of compassion and help. In busy lives we do well to follow our Lord in making time to meet and respond to the needs of the truly needy, nearby and afar. In Jesus' regular compassion among the busy action of Mark, we are inspired to do so.

