

## The Forgotten Gospel

Of all of the gospels, Mark is the one that Christians are least likely to study and appreciate. It doesn't have the prophetic intricacy of Matthew, the chronological precision of Luke, or the poetic Christology of John. To our modern eyes, Mark seems very blunt, rough-hewn, the grim record of a minor-key Messiah who stalks through His ministry constantly predicting His own death and berating His disciples for their lack of faith. The multitudes don't understand Him, the Pharisees hate Him, and His own followers are afraid of Him. When Mark describes the way that the women came to the empty tomb on the first day of the week, He focuses on the way they initially flee the scene in terror. What to us is a transcendent symbol of hope was to them the source of trembling.

None of this fits very well with our Precious Moments conception of Jesus, with the gentle prophet of the healing hands and "Come unto Me". That Jesus was never mean to anybody, and He certainly wasn't scary! That way of thinking, so common to believers both inside and outside the church, is precisely why we need to study Mark. The historical Jesus is too complex a figure to be reduced to a few lines in a Hallmark card, and Mark forces us into complexity, into a deeper realization of what it was actually like to walk with the Christ. The natural human reaction to miraculous defiance of the laws of nature is not to jump up and down and say, "Oh, goody!" It is to be terrified because the world no longer makes sense, and Mark captures the essence of that terror. Jesus wasn't a gentle breeze blowing through Galilee. He was a whirlwind, and no life He encountered was ever left just the same.

In the same way, as we encounter Jesus in Mark, we are changed too. We better understand the awe we should feel for the wonder-working Son of God. We better sympathize with the bleakness of the chosen Sacrifice, who knew that every step took Him closer to the cross. We better grasp the momentous meaning of "Follow Me." Mark may be the forgotten gospel, but if we remember it, we shall be the richer for it.

### About the Author

M. W. Bassford lives in Joliet, IL, with his wife, Lauren, where he preaches for the Joliet church of Christ.

# And They Fled From the Tomb

Unearthing the Mystery of Mark



M. W. Bassford