

Section 4 – The Main Themes

Introductory Video Transcript

Welcome to the fourth section of this course on Jesus in Mark's gospel. Our goal is to come to know Jesus, his life and mission, so that we can grow in our relationship with him. In this section we are going to be looking at the main themes of the gospel. But before doing so, I would like to take some time to review what we have seen so far.

I like to compare Bible reading to visiting a city. Most people love to visit new places. Just last week I visited a town near Rome, where I am currently living. It was a typical medieval Italian town built on top of a hill. We just strolled through the streets looking at the people and the buildings before stopping at a gelateria for an ice-cream and then driving home. It was beautiful. I think many people read the Bible this way. They just stroll through the text.

Another way of visiting a city is to fly over it. You can see the same things, but from a different perspective, the bird's-eye view. Some cities developed chaotically, others were built from scratch according to a plan and when you fly over them you can identify this pattern. This is how we read Mark's Gospel in the previous section when we studied its structure. We looked for patterns: repetitions, groupings, inclusions, even sandwiches. Mark used these to communicate his message.

If in the bird's-eye view we fly over a city, another way of visiting a city is what we could call the bug's-eye view, that is we come up real close to see all the details. I'm not very good at this. I can see a museum in a couple of hours. I just start at the top and walk down, looking at everything for a couple of seconds. I'm always amazed at how some people can spend what seems like hours just staring at one work of art. Obviously they see a lot more detail in it than I can discover. This is how we studied chapter one. We did a verse-by-verse, even a word-by-word study looking at all the details. How would Mark's intended audience understand these words? We looked at how they related to the Old Testament.

So, strolling through a city, the bird's-eye view, the bug's-eye view, these are not just three ways of visiting a city, they are also three ways of reading the Bible. Bible reading is a lifelong project and I hope you apply all these three ways to your Bible study. Now in this section, we are going to change gears. We are going to look at the main themes of the gospel.

When you analyze the text, it appears that Mark wrote his gospel to answer three questions: (1) Who was Jesus? (2) What was his mission? And (3) what does it mean to be his disciple? We will dedicate a learning unit to each of these questions.

I hope you will enjoy the material I have prepared for you. Good luck and may God bless you!