

# Book Review: A Theology of Mark's Gospel

November 20, 2015

[\*A Theology of Mark's Gospel\*](#) by David E. Garland (Zondervan)

☒ Readers familiar with David Garland, professor of Christian Scriptures at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary, may approach his latest book, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel*, with high expectations. Prepare to have those expectations surpassed.

Anyone who sees the New Testament book of Mark as the *Reader's Digest* gospel—a fourth-tier barebones telling of the story of Jesus, without the benefit of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, Luke's parables of the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son, or John's distinctive teachings about the new birth—never will view it that way again after reading this book. Garland presents Mark not only as the reliable chronicler of Simon Peter's eyewitness account of Jesus, but also as a skilled narrative theologian. In telling the story of Jesus, Mark presents compelling proof he was and is the unique Son of God and the long-awaited Messiah—the Christ—not just because he made those assertions about himself, but because he did what only God's Son and the Messiah could do.

Although it is not a verse-by-verse commentary, the second chapter, "A Literary and Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel," provides an outline and insightful section-by-section examination of the Scripture text. If Garland had written nothing but that one chapter, it still would have been valuable to any serious student of the New Testament. But he didn't stop there. Other chapters offer helpful insights into Mark's theology regarding discipleship, mission, the kingdom of God, atonement and salvation.

Garland offers an in-depth discussion regarding the disputed verses in the

last chapter of Mark, and he makes a compelling case for considering Mark 16:8 as the intended ending. Garland maintains Mark crafted an open-ended conclusion purposefully. If it seems like an unfinished symphony to modern Christians, Garland suggests reading the whole Gospel in light of its first verse: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark just wrote the beginning of the story; he intended it to continue in each generation as the Risen Christ works in and through his followers, carrying out Christ’s mission and proclaiming the gospel until his return.

*A Theology of Mark’s Gospel* should be on the bookshelf of every pastor, and it also would make a worthy addition to any church library.

Ken Camp, managing editor

*Baptist Standard*