

Miracle of Miracles! Max McLean Brings 'Mark's Gospel' To The Masses

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The crowd is greeted by the vision of a young man sitting upon a block, writing what he calls, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Max McLean starts out as the young John Mark, recording the life and purpose of a controversial, historical figure, Jesus, the Christ. After beginning as the narrator, McLean launches into controlled chaos as he plays every feasible character within the narrative. This is an extremely intense, nearly two hour monologue, which is performed by this talented actor.

There are many movies on the life of Christ, but the truly unique skill that is required in this performance is to understand the interpretive issues involved in bringing to life the emotion behind this narrative which was written almost two thousand years ago. Many times old and familiar texts lose their meaning, but what comes from this portrayal of the Gospel according to Mark is the truth that this story will never grow out of its relevance.

It is often said that Jesus is the most controversial figure that has ever lived. Why shouldn't He be? He has claimed to do what only God can do, "...That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." (Mark 2:10). Peter called Him the Christ (Mark 8:29), making Him the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. Many Jews called Him the Christ (Mark 11:1-11). He was unlawfully prosecuted and sentenced to a public, barbaric death on a Roman torture device (Mark 14-15). After the death of the Christ, Mark shares with the readers that Jesus did not stay dead, but had risen from the dead, the empty tomb witnessed by the women and the Christ being ultimately triumphant.

There is a difficulty in portraying a text versus merely the event behind it. In looking at a synopsis of the four gospels, we can speculate events as they may have happened or seek to fill in chronological gaps, but this misses the point of Mark's gospel. Mark is a young man, writing to a Gentile audience, as evidenced by his Greek translations of many Aramaic phrases (Mk. 5:41; 15:22, 34). He has an extremely unique style, providing snapshots of the life of Christ, focusing on the teachings and the miracles and the ultimate climax which comes at the death and resurrection of the Messiah. There are many chronological gaps because Mark's purpose is to show that Jesus is the Suffering Servant and the Sovereign Lord (Mark 10:45). These snapshots can feel disorganized, even schizophrenic, but McLean's contribution through this presentation is to teach the reader how to see both the purpose of John Mark and the life of the person of Jesus the Christ clearly.

Jesus is still relevant because of whom He is and what He has done and this wonderful performance strikes at the heart of what was really intended by John Mark. C.S. Lewis has said, "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." This quote is merely amplified by the performance of McLean as he portrays both John Mark and Jesus, who is the Messiah of the Gospel of Mark and of God's people.

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