# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

## Introduction

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1. Inspiration has seen fit to give us four different accounts of the life of Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
   1. Each of them is alike in that they tell of Jesus’ days of earth.
   2. Each of them is different with regard to the perspective they present.
2. We want to begin a series on “The Gospel of Mark.”
   1. In this lesson, we will introduce the book.
   2. In the following lessons, we will study one or more chapters each week for the first portion of the lesson and then concentrate on some in depth questions that the material raises.

### THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK

* 1. The book itself is anonymous. No author is specifically named.
  2. The earliest witness to Mark’s being the author comes from a quote of Papias, an elder of the church of Hierapolis, which is 22 km from Laodicea and near Colossae who lived from 60 to 130 A.D. He wrote:

“Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord, but not however in order.”

* 1. NOTE: It is unlikely that the early church would assign the gospel to a minor figure like John Mark unless he was the author.
  2. Background of John Mark.

1. John is his Jewish name; Mark is his Roman name.
2. The first mention is in Acts 12:12, when Peter is coming to his mother's house:

“And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.”

1. John Mark himself appears a bit later in the same chapter, in

Acts 12:25, as the travel companion of Saul (Apostle Paul) and Barnabas:

“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.”

1. John Mark is mentioned soon after the Council of Jerusalem in

Acts 15:37-41. Paul (Saul) does not have a too flattering impression of his former associate, arguing over him with Barnabas in Antioch:

“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.”

1. This is apparently the same occurrence that was earlier

mentioned in Acts 13:13, this time referring to John Mark simply as "John":

“Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”

1. This John had joined their mission in Antioch. Acts 13:4-5 says:

“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.”

1. Ultimately John Mark returned to the ministry 2 Timothy 4:11. This is evidenced by the instruction to Timothy that

"Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

* + - 1. John Mark was with Paul during his first imprisonment Col. 4:10

“Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;).

So it appears that he was Barnabas’ nephew which may explain why he wanted him along back when he and Paul separated. And Paul also mentions him in Philemon 23-24.

“There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.”

* + - 1. John Mark was also with Peter when he wrote his first epistle (I Pet. 5:13).

“The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.”

### THE OCCASION OF THE BOOK

A. Time enough had passed for the gospel to permeate the Roman

Empire.

B. The Jewish historian Eusebius quotes Clement as saying:

“…the request of many Romans that Mark reduce to writing the preaching of Peter” (Thiessen, 145).

### THE RECIPIENTS: Romans

A. Mark begins his book with Jesus as the Son of God (Mark 1:1),

not from his connection to Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1).

B. The author does not appeal to the OT, except in the case of

Isaiah’s prophecy about John the Baptist (Mark 1:2). He does note that Jesus quotes from the OT several times.

C. Jewish references are explained by the author since they were

unfamiliar to the Roman readers.

1. Fasting (Mark 2:18)

2. Washings (Mark 7:3-4)

3. The mount of Olives being “over against the temple” (Mark 13:3)

4. The Passover (Mark 14:12)

5. The preparation, that is, the day of the Sabbath (Mark 15:42)

D. The author uses Latin expression freely in the book:

1. Legion (Mark 5:9)

2. An executioner (Mark 6:27)

3. Treasury (Mark 12:41)

4. Praetorium (Mark 15;16)

5. Centurion (Mark 15:39)

E. The Romans were impressed with power and authority. Thus,

Jesus is shown to have power, even over the hadean realm.

F. The Romans were also impressed with action and accomplishments.

Thus, Mark’s focus is more upon the works than the words of Jesus.

G. The writer is the only one to record in Mark 11:17:

“And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

H. The Romans saw themselves as the servants of Rome. This Jesus

is presented by Mark as “The Servant of God.”

### THE DATE OF THE BOOK: Early to mid 60s A.D.

### THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

A. THE PRESENTATION OF THE SERVANT (Mark 1:1-2:12)

B. THE OPPOSITION TO THE SERVANT (Mark 2:13-8:26)

C. THE INSTRUCTION BY THE SERVANT (Mark 8:27-10:52)

D. THE REJECTION OF THE SERVANT (Mark 11:1-15-47)

E. THE RESURRECTION OF THE SERVANT (Mark 16:1-20)

### THE KEY VERSE OF THE BOOK: Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

### THE THEME OF THE BOOK: Jesus, the Perfect Servant of God

A. The Picture of the Servant of God

1. The fact that He was a servant (Mark 10:45)

2. He was a human servant:

a. He was fatigued and fell asleep (Mark 4:38-39).

b. He had a physical mother and brethren (Mark 6:3).

c. He was employed as a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

d. He was amazed (Mark 6:6).

e. He was disappointed (Mark 8:12).

f. He was displeased (Mark 10:14).

g. He was angry (Mark 11:15-17).

h. He was sorrowful (Mark 14:34).

i. He possessed a physical body (Mark 15:43).

j. He was killed (Mark 15:37).

3. He was a humble servant (Mark 14:36).

“And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

4. He was an active servant.

a. About 2/3 of the verses begin with “and.”

b. The word “straightway,” the Greek “euthos,” is found 42 times and is translated by six English words.

1) Straightway (19)

2) Immediately (17)

3) Forthwith (3)

4) As soon as (2)

5) By and by (1)

6) Anon (1)

c. Great emphasis is placed on the miracles of Jesus. Mark tells of 19 miracles and only a few parables.

d. Twice Mark reveals that in the press of events the apostles had no time to eat (Mark 3:20; 6:31).

5. He was a compassionate servant.

a. Four times it is said that Jesus had compassion on someone (Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2).

b. His heart grieved over the unbelief of some (Mark 3:5)

c. He took little children into His arms (Mark 9:36; 10:16).

6. He was a powerful, authoritative servant.

a. He taught as one having authority (Mark 1:22).

b. He commanded even the unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him (Mark 1:27).

c. The Son of man had the authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:10).

d. Mighty works were wrought by his hands (Mark 6:2).

e. He was resurrected from the dead (Mark 16:1-8).

7. He was a teaching servant.

a. Mark 1:38

“And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.”

b. Four parables (Mark 4) sower, candlestick, harvest, mustard seed.

c. Humility (who is greatest), sectarianism (non-follower casting out devils), and offences (hand offend thee) (Mark 9:33-50)

d. Divorce (lawful to put away ones wife), little children (suffer the little children), riches (rich young ruler), reward (receive a hundredfold), worldly ambition (sit on right and left hand) (Mark 10)

e. Questions (tribute to Caesar, seven brothers wife, greatest commandment) (Mark 12)

f. Destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13)

g. He also taught men to serve (Mark 8:34; 10:42-44).

“But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”

8. He was a suffering servant.

a. He foretold His suffering to His disciples (Mark 8:31; 9:31-32).

b. He was arrested and crucified (Mark 14-15).

B. The example and teaching of this Servant of God runs contrary to the thinking in our present world.

1. The thinking of most: “What’s in it for me?”

2. Evolution: Survival of the fittest

3. Human Potential Movement: Seek fulfillment regardless of the cost to others

4. Feminist movement: serving men and children oppresses women

5. Welfare State: I am entitled; others work and give to me

### CONCLUSION

A. Mark is the shortest of all the gospels, but it is packed with a wealth of information.

B. Watching Jesus serve provides the example for our service.

C. Special studies:

1. Mark’s gospel parallels Peter’s sermon at the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:37-43).

Baptism and temptation (Acts 10:37-38a)

Doing good and healing (Acts 10:38b-39a)

Crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 10:39b-40a)

Great commission (Acts 10:40b-43)

2. The “Messianic Secret” (Mark 1:34, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9)

3. The ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) is omitted by early manuscripts.