

The Gospel of Mark

Gospel of Mark Introduced – Week 1



Introduction:

Who Wrote the Gospel of Mark?

- Attributed (by Papias, ca A.D. 125) to John Mark, a sometime companion of Paul and later of Peter (1 Pet 5:13)
- Peter's use of the 'my son' label indicates that he and Mark had a close relationship. Most scholars believe that Mark's gospel is written with Peter's eye-witness accounts of Jesus' ministry.
- Thought to have come from a wealthy Jewish family living in Jerusalem who embraced Jesus and in whose home the apostles set up headquarters after Pentecost.
- First hear of Mark as a companion to Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey
- Splits with Paul under less than amicable circumstances. Wishes to rejoin Paul for the second journey but goes off with Barnabas instead.
- Mark resurfaces again when Paul tells the Colossians that Mark is with him in Rome. (Col 4:10 "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas") though it would appear that Mark leaves and is called back later by Paul (2 Tim. 4:11)

When and Where did Mark write?

- Most scholars would date Mark's gospel between 50 and 70 AD. It was before the fall of Jerusalem and is regarded as the first gospel account to have been written.
- Mark wrote while in Rome and wrote to the church in Rome. This places Mark in Rome during the days of Emperor Nero, a period of significant persecution.
- Because of Mark's close relationship with Peter, it may be just as appropriate to call this the gospel according to Peter.

Probably Mark completes his inspired work after Peter's death. The product is what William Barclay has called the "... most important book in the world."¹ Not only is it the earliest of the synoptic Gospels and the first written account of the life of Jesus that we know, but it is accepted in the courts of tradition and scholarship as admissible evidence from an eyewitness who was there when Jesus served and suffered, lived and died, arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. As a fair and accurate reporter who captures both the truth and the tone of Peter's

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 1.

witness, Mark qualifies as a communicator par excellence.¹

Why and How did Mark write?

- Because the situational setting of Mark's gospel is the increasing persecution of the Christian church by Nero, Mark's purpose in writing seems to have been, through his writing of the story of Jesus, encouraging his readers to believe in the Jesus who also suffered and died but was raised again. Mark emphasises Jesus power over nature and demons and the appearance of the Kingdom of God.
- With Peter speaking Aramaic and Mark writing to a group who read in Greek, he had to translate Peter's Aramaic to common Greek. A recent study has shown that this is why Mark's use of the Greek language at times comes across as awkward. When the study translated Mark's Greek back into Aramaic the language flowed much better.

To Roman Christians who are daily facing death, he sends a letter of compassion, precision, urgency, and hope. Whether he knows it or not, he also writes a Gospel for the ages, inviting us to study his message, confess the Christ, and receive the power of our resurrected Lord.²

An Overview:

The following is one way in which Mark's Gospel can be divided up:

The Prologue: Introduction to Jesus and the Kingdom

1:1-15

Part 1: The Kingdom Goes Public—Disciples, Crowds, Opposition

1:16–3:6

Part 2: The Mystery of the Kingdom—Faith, Misunderstanding, Hard Hearts

3:7–8:21

Part 3: The Mystery Unveiled—The Cross and the Way of Discipleship

8:22–10:45

Part 4: The King Comes to Jerusalem to Die

10:46–15:47

Epilogue: The Story Is Not Over

16:1–8

¹ David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, vol. 25, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 25 : Mark*, The Preacher's Commentary series (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982), 15.

² David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, 17.

Our Plan:

- Week 1 – Introduction and Chapter 1
- Week 2 – Chapters 2 - 4
- Week 3 – Chapters 5 - 7
- Week 4 – Chapters 8 - 10
- Week 5 – Chapters 11 - 13
- Week 6 – Chapters 14 - 16

Homework:

Make yourself as familiar with Mark’s Gospel as you can. At the very least read the chapters we are looking at before Monday evening.

As you read write down any questions that come to mind so we can discuss them during the coming evening. If possible email them through to me so I can give them some consideration before Monday. My email address is grahami@riverviewchurch.com.au

Some questions will be set for you to consider for each of the week’s chapters.

Recommended resources – “King’s Cross” by Tim Keller; “Mark for Everyone” by Tom Wright;

The Prologue: 1:1-15

 **Read Mark 1:1 – What ideas come to mind from these 14 words?**

*The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,
the Son of God³*

The beginning.....

of the Good News

Jesus.....

the Messiah.....

³ *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mk 1:1.

son of God

In one short and profound sentence, Mark announces his theme and gives the outline of his book. His opening sentence speaks his purpose. In contrast with Matthew, who starts with a genealogy and needs sixteen verses to announce that Jesus is King of the Jews; in contrast with Luke, who begins with a sentence of eighty-two words in order to tell the story of Jesus as the Savior of all men; or in contrast with John, who introduces his Gospel with a sentence of seventeen mystical and baffling words to show that Jesus is the Son of God, Mark puts it all together in a simple sentence of twelve words. In his brief prologue, Mark promises a book that moves in historical rhythm with the kingdom of God, sounds the “Good News” of redemptive grace, identifies Jesus with all who serve, claims salvation through the suffering of the Christ, and promises the life and power of the Son of God as our ever-present hope.⁴

An ancient prophecy: 1:2–3

Mark makes it very clear that the evidence for Jesus being the Messiah is found in his fulfilling the story of the Old Testament.

Mark quotes from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

Malachi’s prediction refers in history to the Lord coming to His temple in judgment for the sins of His people; Isaiah’s words are preparatory to the coming of the Servant Lord who will deliver His people from their bondage in Babylon.⁵

These 2 verses are just the tip of a large group of promises that the Jews were holding on to.

One of the great promises that Israel had cherished for centuries was that when YHWH finally made the Exodus story happen all over again, setting his people free once and for all, that would be the time when he would come to live personally with his people. He would be with them;

⁴ David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, 25-26.

⁵ David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, 27.

he would be their God, and they would be his people. How would he do this?⁶

Announced by Man: 1:4-8

John the Baptist announces the arrival of the 'someone' who he has been hinting about.

Affirmed by God: 1:9-11

 **What Old Testament pictures seem to be a part of these verses?**

A few points to note here;

1. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove
2. The apocalyptic symbolism of the opening of heaven – Isa. 64:1, Eze. 1:1
3. A seeming combination of Isa.42:1 and Ps. 2:7
4. A strong connection with Gal. 4:4-7
5. Jesus was Messiah and this shows how he was anointed.

Acknowledged by Satan: 1:12-13

 **Read these 2 verses. What comes to mind as you consider the following words; must, wilderness, Satan, wild animals, angels?**

Must:

Wilderness:

Satan:

Wild animals:

⁶ Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 3.

Angels:

What does this tell us?

1. Following Jesus is not an easy road
2. Faithful discipleship is more about doing God's will than feeling good
3. The animals and the angels broaden our vision of the kingdom

His Message 1:14-15

Jesus goes to Galilee:

Galilee was the centre of a humming political and commercial life. It stood at the crossroads of the nations of the ancient world, through which the armies and the traders and the diplomats passed. There some of the greatest battles of the world had been fought... Galilee was the home of a thoroughly cosmopolitan population: Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic would all be heard in the markets; Syrian, Jew, Roman and Parthian mixed freely. It was a land of passing excitements and dangerous fashions, of a barbarous dialect and offensive manners.⁷

 **What is the 'good news' and what is the expected response?**

His Men 1:16-20

Normally a Jewish man would, if they did well in their early education, look for and then approach a Rabbi to be their teacher. Jesus, as he so often does, turns the culture on its head by seeking out and inviting the people he wanted.

Those who answer Jesus' call are asked to be trustworthy, teachable, and task-oriented.⁸

His Authority 1:21-34

Jesus establishes His authority with his visit to the synagogue. The establishment of his authority leads to two groups acknowledging him and drawing near to him;

- The demon possessed
- The sick and needy

The preaching of the gospel is not just with words!

⁷ Donald English, *The Message of Mark : The Mystery of Faith*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 48-49.

⁸ David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, 45.

When the church learns again how to speak and act with the same authority, we will find both the saving power of God unleashed once more and a similar heightened opposition from the forces of darkness. Similar, but not the same. The demons knew Jesus, and knew he had come to defeat them once and for all. They can still shriek, but since Calvary they no longer have authority. To believe this is the key to Christian testimony and saving action in the world that, despite its frequent panic and despair, has already been claimed by the loving authority of God in Jesus.⁹

His Field 1:35-45

Jesus gave up the security of staying in a place where he was honoured to go into the unknown.

Maybe he set an example?

 **What do we learn from Jesus encounter with the leper?**

Homework:

Mark Chapters 2-4

From these chapters what are the 4 most important events or descriptions for you?

⁹ Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 12-13.