

The Gospel of Mark

The New Testament Class #5

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REVIEW:

The Gospel According to Mark (Greek: τὸ κατὰ Μάρκον εὐαγγέλιον = to kata Markon euangelion), the 2nd book of the New Testament, and is one of the four canonical gospels and the three synoptic gospels.

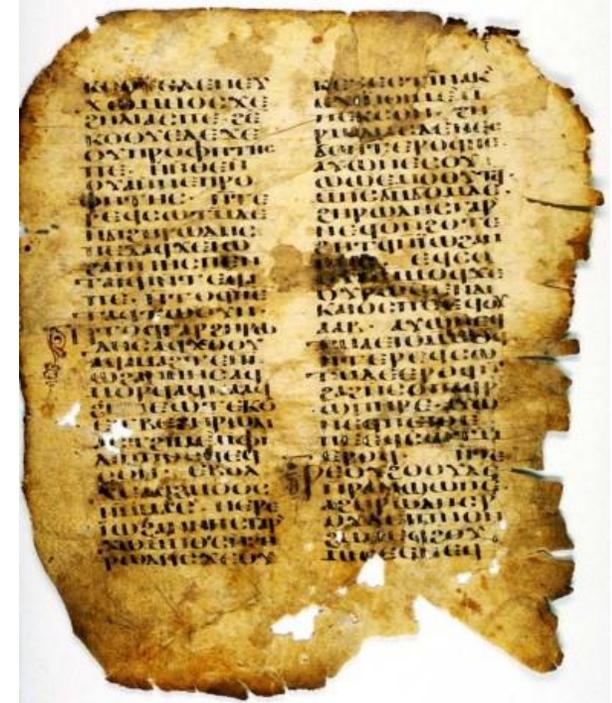
AUTHOR:

Although the book is anonymous, apart from the ancient heading “*According to Mark*” in manuscripts, it has traditionally been assigned to John Mark, in whose mother’s house (at Jerusalem) Christians assembled (Acts 12:12). This Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and accompanied Barnabas and Paul on a missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:3; 15:36–39). He appears in Pauline letters (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24) and with Peter, in which he calls him “*my son*” (1 Peter 5:13). Church Father Papias (ca. A.D. 135) described Mark as Peter’s “*interpreter*,” a view found in other patristic writers.

WHEN AND WHERE WAS IT WRITTEN (AND CONTEXT):

Traditionally, the gospel is said to have been written shortly before or circa A.D. 70 in Rome, at a time of impending persecution and when destruction loomed over Jerusalem. Its audience seems to have been Gentile, unfamiliar with Jewish customs (hence Mark 7:3–4, 11). That Mark was written in Greek, for a gentile audience is shown by the author's need to explain Jewish traditions and translate Aramaic terms) of Greek-speaking Christians.

The book aimed to equip such Christians to stand faithful in the face of persecution (Mark 13:9–13), while going on with the proclamation of the gospel begun in Galilee (Mark 13:10; 14:9). Around the time the Gospel of Mark was written, we have the persecutions of Nero (64 A.D), and the Jewish revolt against Rome (66–73 CE).



OVERVIEW:

This is the shortest of all New Testament gospels (16 Chapters), yet it often tells of Jesus' ministry in more detail than either Matthew or Luke (for example, the miracle stories at Mark 5:1–20 or Mark 9:14–29). It recounts what Jesus did in a vivid style, where one incident follows directly upon another. In this fast-and-quick narrative, Mark stresses Jesus' message about the kingdom of God now breaking into human life as good news (Mark 1:14–15) and Jesus himself as the gospel of God (Mark 1:1; 8:35; 10:29). Jesus is the Son whom God has sent to rescue humanity by serving and by sacrificing his life – the Suffering Servant - (Mark 10:45). Jesus is also the son of God, but he keeps his identity secret, concealing it in parables so that even the disciples fail to understand – **THE MESSIANIC SECRET** -.

CONTENT OF MARK:

Mark begins with the appearance of John the Baptist, a messenger of God attested by scripture. But John points to a mightier one, Jesus, at whose baptism God speaks from heaven, declaring Jesus his Son. The Spirit descends upon Jesus, who eventually, it is promised, will baptize "*with the holy Spirit.*" This presentation of who Jesus really is (Mark 1:1–13) is rounded out with a brief reference to the temptation of Jesus and how Satan's attack fails. Jesus as Son of God will be victorious, a point to be remembered as one reads of Jesus' death and the enigmatic ending to Mark's Gospel.

The key verses at **Mark 1:14–15**, summarize what Jesus proclaims as gospel: fulfillment, the nearness of the kingdom, and therefore the need for repentance and for faith.

After the call of the first four disciples, all fishermen (Mk 1:16–20), we see Jesus engaged in teaching (Mark 1:21, 22, 27), preaching (Mark 1:38, 39), and healing (Mark 1:29–31, 34, 40–45), and exorcising demons (1:22–27, 34–39).

The content of Jesus' teaching is only rarely stated, and then chiefly in parables (Mark 4) about the kingdom. Jesus performs 18 miracles in the Gospel of Mark.

In Mark, Jesus is portrayed as immensely popular with the people in Galilee during his ministry (Mark 2:2; 3:7; 4:1).

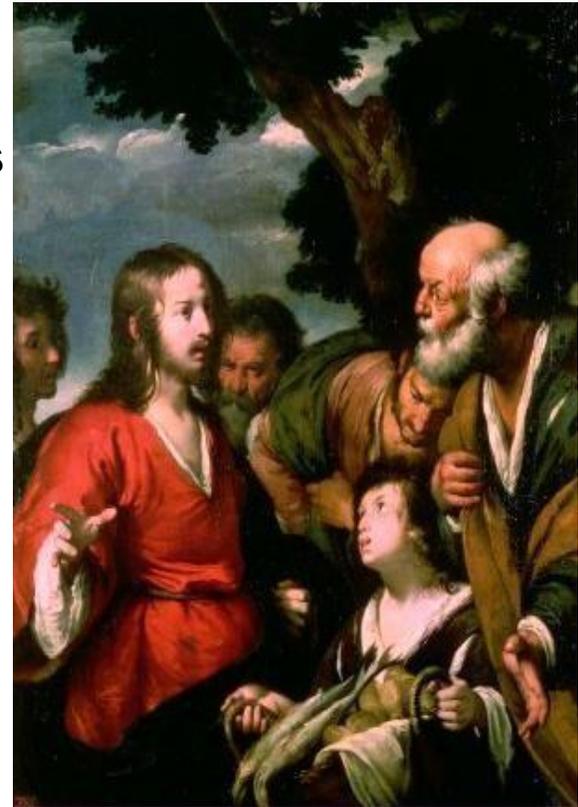
He appoints twelve disciples to help preach and drive out demons, just as he does (Mark 3:13–19). He continues to work many miracles; the blocks Mark 4:35–6:44 and Mark 6:45–7:10 are cycles of stories about healings, miracles at the Sea of Galilee, and the feedings of the crowds. **The Feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:31-44)** is the only miracle (apart from the resurrection) which is present in all 4 canonical Gospels, and the Feeding of the 4,000 (Mark 8:1-9).

Jesus' teaching in Mark 7 exalts the word of God over "*the tradition of the elders*" and sees defilement as a matter of the heart, not of unclean foods. Yet opposition mounts.

Scribes charge that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul (Mark 3:22). His relatives think him "*out of his mind*" (Mark 3:21). Jesus' kinship is with those who do the will of God, in a new eschatological family, not even with mother, brothers, or sisters by blood ties (Mark 3:31–35; cf. Mark 6:1–6). But all too often his own disciples do not understand Jesus (Mk 4:13, 40; 6:52; 8:17–21) – **THEY DON'T GET IT - .**

The fate of John the Baptist (Mk 6:17–29) hints vividly at Jesus' own passion (Mark 9:13; cf. Mark 8:31).

A breakthrough seemingly comes with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah; (Mark 8:27–30). But Jesus himself emphasizes his passion (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34), not glory in the kingdom (Mark 10:35–45).





Jesus is glimpsed in his true identity when he is transfigured before three of the disciples (Mark 9:2–8), but by and large Jesus is depicted in Mark as moving obediently along the way to his cross in Jerusalem. Occasionally there are miracles (Mark 9:17–27; 10:46–52; 11:12–14, 20–21, the only such account in Jerusalem), sometimes teachings (Mark 10:2–11, 23–31), but the greatest concern is with discipleship (Mark 8:34–9:1; 9:33–50).

For the disciples still do not grasp the mystery being revealed (Mark 9:32; 10:32, 38) – **THEY STILL DON'T GET IT** - .

One of them will betray him, Judas (Mark 14:10–11, 43–45); one will deny him, Peter (Mark 14:27, 31, 54, 66–72); all eleven men will desert Jesus (Mark 14:27, 50).

The passion account, with its condemnation of Jesus by the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53, 55–65; 15:1) and sentencing by Pilate (Mk 15:1b–15), is prefaced with the entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–11), ministry and controversies there (Mark 11:15–12:44), Jesus' Last Supper with the disciples (Mark 14:1–26) – **THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST** - , and his arrest at Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–52). A chapter of apocalyptic tone about the destruction of the temple (Mark 13:1–2, 14–23) and the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 13:24–27), a discourse filled with promises (Mark 13:11, 31) and admonitions to be watchful (Mk 13:2, 23, 37), is significant for Mark's Gospel, for it helps one see that God, in Jesus, will be victorious after the cross and at the end of history. The Gospel of Mark ends in the most ancient manuscripts with an abrupt scene at Jesus' tomb, which the women find empty (Mark 16:1–8). His own prophecy of Mark 14:28 is reiterated, that Jesus goes before the disciples into Galilee; *“there you will see him.”*

CONCLUSION:

Mark's Gospel is even more oriented to Christology.

Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 1:11; 9:7; 15:39; cf. Mark 1:1; 14:61). He is the Messiah, the anointed king of Davidic descent (Mark 12:35; 15:32), the Greek for which, Christos, has, by the time Mark wrote, become in effect a proper name (Mark 1:1; 9:41). Jesus is also seen as Son of Man, a term used in Mark not simply as a substitute for "I" or for humanity in general (cf. Mark 2:10, 27–28; 14:21) or with reference to a mighty figure who is to come (Mark 13:26; 14:62), but also in connection with Jesus' predestined, necessary path of suffering and vindication, the Suffering Servant (Mark 8:31; 10:45).



The principal divisions of the Gospel of Mark:

- I. The Preparation for the Public Ministry of Jesus (1:1–13).**
 - II. The Mystery of Jesus (1:14–8:26).**
 - III. The Mystery Begins to be Revealed (8:27–9:32).**
 - IV. The Full Revelation of the Mystery (9:33–16:8).**
 - V. The Longer Ending (16:9–20).**
- The Shorter Ending**

THE STRUCTURE OF MARK

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