

The Gospel According to Mark Introduction

Theme: Jesus as Servant

Key Verse: “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” 10:45

Author: John Mark

- See Acts 12:12 for first mention; son of Mary, a wealthy and prominent Christian in the church in Jerusalem
- Nephew of Barnabus (Col. 4:10)
- Spiritual son of Peter (I Peter 5:13)
- Deserted Paul and Barnabus during 1st missionary journey (Acts 13:13)
- Restored in Paul’s eyes later on (Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philemon 24)

We serve a God of restoration!

Date: Believed to be the first of the gospels, written ~ A.D. 55

Many believe this is Peter’s gospel, meaning Mark got most of his material from the eyewitness reports and preaching of Peter. It reflects Peter’s personality.

Mark is all about facts and action cast in a rapid pace rather than themes. Shortest, yet often most detailed. Jewish customs carefully explained for Roman readers.

Likely written in Rome (Mark likely with Paul at the time), to Romans and for Romans.

Style:

Mark is urgent. No genealogy, nothing on the birth of Christ, by end of chapter one he’s covered ministry of forerunner, baptism of Christ, first preaching, calling of Peter and Andrew and several miracles. The Servant of Jehovah has come to serve mankind and there’s no time to waste.

Mark is brief, fast and blunt, short and sweet. Peter must have said, “get to the point man” and he did! Writing style and vocabulary is simple, designed for the common man on the street.

“And” occurs more than any other word – 1,331 times – with every “and” leading to further action. Like a young child excitedly telling us a story.

J. Vernon McGee: “This is the Gospel of action and accomplishment. Here Jesus is not adorned with words and narrative, but He is stripped and girded for action.”

Background of Readers:

Romans, a busy people impressed by power and action, so he writes briefly in a way that would appeal to the Roman mind.

Unlike Matthew, few OT Scriptures are quoted. And Mark explains Jewish customs for his Gentile readers.

Consistent with theme and style, miracles are dominant (page for page more than any other gospel (19 total)) that demonstrate Christ’s power and compassion as the Servant of the Lord.

Likely why Mark omits items of no interest to Gentile readers, such as genealogy of Christ (no one cares about the genealogy of a servant!), fulfilled prophecy, references to the Law and certain Jewish customs.

He uses and then interprets Aramaic words (4x) and a number of Latin terms in place of Greek terms (7x) further confirming his Roman/Gentile audience.

McGee: “Mark was written by a busy man about a busy Person for busy people.”

Major Themes of the Gospel According to Mark

1. Jesus, the Man of Action

- a. “immediately” 41x (more than rest of NT)
- b. Historical present (150x) – using a present tense verb in a historical, story-telling context; puts you there and draws you right into the action
- c. Emphasis on events (with their vivid details) not discourses
- d. 89 paragraphs in Mark; Jesus is in 87 of them!

2. Jesus, The Son of God, the Son of Man

- a. Christ – 6x; goal of chapters 1 – 8 to bring us to Peter’s conclusion in 8:29
- b. Son of Man – 14x
 - i. Jesus had human emotions
 1. compassion, 1:41, 6:34
 2. anger and grief, 3:5
 3. deep sigh, 7:34; 8:12

- ii. Jesus had human limitations
 - 1. asleep on the cushion, 4:38
 - 2. hunger, 11:12
 - 3. no knowledge of the day or hour of His return, 13:32
- iii. Other indications of true humanness
 - 1. He spit and touched tongue of a deaf-mute, 7:33-34;
 - 2. His interaction with children – touched them, took them in his arms, laying his hands on them and indignant when disciples sought to stop the children
- c. Son of God – 6x; goal of chapters 9ff is to bring us to this conclusion with the Centurion (see 15:39)

Son of God, Son of Man conveys both His power as Deity and His humility as man and is echoed by the key verse: “For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.” 10:45

3. The Gospel

- a. 1:1, 14-15 and 8:35 – Gospel and Jesus Christ are linked together. In Rome, the birth and ascension of a Caesar was called “good news”
- b. Jews had in their collective mindset an awareness of the “good news of God”
- c. Mark’s message – Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of God’s good news to the world
- d. Centerpiece of God’s good news is Mark 10:45. Mark devotes ~40% of his writing to the last 8 days of Jesus life as he moves toward the epitome of Jesus’ serving man – His death on the Cross.

4. Faith

- a. Root word for faith used 19x
- b. Object is Christ and good news associated with Him
- c. Faith in Mark means to enter in and walk with Christ

5. Discipleship (~30x)

- a. First 4 (Peter, Andrew, James and John) with Him the entire gospel of Mark
- b. Jesus’ great desire for them is to have faith (see 4:40, 9:29, 11:22)

6. Opposition to Jesus

- a. Satanic Opposition – huge emphasis on demon possession, demons and their fear Christ had come to destroy them
- b. Religious Opposition
 - i. 2:7 and 3:6, they sought to destroy Him
 - ii. Scribes mentioned 20x, Pharisees 12x, NONE are positive
 - iii. Of course a and b above are closely related.

7. Suffering and Death

- a. John was delivered up, Jesus will be delivered up
- b. 8:31 “He must suffer”
- c. Cost of our discipleship flows out of the course He has taken, so disciples must be willing to suffer and die to follow Him; once He’s revealed as the Christ, cost of discipleship is pressed upon His followers.

Mark’s Purpose:

Show forth the full humanity of Jesus in serving man and the full deity of Jesus in His miraculous powers to support the reader’s trusting Christ who gave His life a ransom for many.

How does Mark accomplish his purpose?

By using constant questions as part of the dialogue in chapters 1 – 8:

- What is this? A new teaching with authority!” 1:27
- Why does this Man speak this way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone? 2:7
- 3:21 – has He?
- Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him? 4:41
- SEE 6:2-3
- SEE 8:27-30 ***

Mark is provoking his reader to ask, “who is this Man?” until Peter’s confession and wants us to arrive at same answer as Peter: “You are the Christ” (8:29).

Peter’s confession then becomes the hinge or turning point in the gospel, which makes sense considering Peter’s influence on Mark.

How so?

Most miracles are in 1 – 8 (making for even more density of miracles); 9 – 16 have only 3 miracles.

Mark's order is the key – our conviction about Christ comes first and this leads to our commitment to Christ. Devoted Discipleship ONLY flows out of the conviction of who Jesus is and this conviction can take some time to happen.

Devoted discipleship moves beyond being merely amazed at His power or miracles to a commitment to the Person working the miracles.

Conclusion? We cannot and should not call people to a faith-commitment in Christ without adequate teaching about Him first. Mark's model ensures more genuine conversions.

We shouldn't call for the response of the gospel – “repent and believe” (1:15) – until there has been adequate presentation of the good news of what God has done for man in and through Christ.

Mark – Summary Outline:

- I. Sent to Serve (1 – 10)
- II. Sent to Save (11 – 16)

Mark – Detailed Outline

- I. The Title: “The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1)
- II. The Prologue: The Introduction to Jesus (1:2 – 13)
- III. The Revelation of the Person of Jesus (1:14 – 8:30)
 - a. The Commencement of the Ministry in Galilee (1:14 – 3:6)
 - i. The Message of Jesus (1:14 – 15)
 - ii. The Call of the Fishermen (1:16 – 20)
 - iii. The Authority of Jesus (1:21 – 45)
 - iv. The Conflict in Galilee (2:1 – 3:6)
 - b. The Climax of the Ministry in Galilee (3:7 – 6:13)
 - i. The Crowds by the Sea (3:7 – 12)
 - ii. The Choice of the Twelve (3:13 – 19)
 - iii. The Character of Jesus’ Family (3:20 – 35)
 - iv. The Parables of the Kingdom (4:1 – 34)
 - v. The Power of Jesus (4:35 – 5:43)
 - vi. The Conflict at Nazareth (6:1 – 6a)
 - vii. The Commissioning of the Twelve (6:6b – 13)
 - c. The Ministry Beyond Galilee (6:14 – 8:30)
 - i. The Death of John the Baptist (6:14 – 29)
 - ii. The Feeding of the 5,000 (6:30 – 7:37)
 - iii. The Feeding of the 4,000 (8:1 – 30)
- IV. The Revelation of the Passion of Jesus (8:31 – 15:41)
 - a. The Predictions of Death (8:31 – 10:52)
 - b. The Final Days in the Temple (11:1 – 13:37)
 - i. The Entrance into Jerusalem (11:1 – 26)
 - ii. The Conflict at the Temple (11:27 – 12:44)
 - iii. The Future of the Temple (13:1 – 37)
 - c. The Crucifixion of Jesus (14:1 – 15:41)
- V. The Epilogue: The Resurrection of Jesus (15:42 – 16:20)