

New Testament Survey—Mark

What stands out to you as you read the gospel of Mark, especially when you compare it to the other three Gospel accounts? Here are some things...

- the shortest of the four gospels
- no mention of Jesus' birth or early life
- the book begins focusing on John the Baptist
- lots of action

- **Who wrote the book?**

- John Mark

- Technically, the book is anonymous, but the testimony of the early church points to Markan authorship. The title "according to Mark" was added later by a scribe some time before 125 A.D.

- A quotation from a man named Papias (around A.D. 110) names Mark as the author of this book and includes the following information about Mark (taken from B.K.C., p. 95):

- 1. He was not an eyewitness follower of Jesus
 2. He accompanied the apostle Peter and heard his preaching
 3. He wrote down accurately all that Peter remembered of Jesus' words and works "but not in order," that is, not always in chronological order.
 4. He was Peter's "interpreter," probably meaning he explained Peter's teaching to a wider audience by writing it down rather than translating Peter's Aramaic discourses into Greek or Latin.
 5. His account is wholly reliable (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3. 39. 15).

- Note: This evidence for Markan authorship is confirmed by Justin Martyr (A.D. 160), Irenaeus (A.D. 180), Tertullian (A.D. 200), and the writings of Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 195) and Origen (A.D. 230).

John Mark: The Person

What do we know about John Mark?

To do: "Detective Game" -- Using your Bible, concordance, and study notes (if you have a study Bible), take 3 minutes to jot down as many details about Mark as you can find (with the Bible reference where the detail is given).

[Afterwards, review the process so people know how to use their study Bible.]

--His mother had a house in Jerusalem that served as a meeting place for believers (Acts 12:12). Perhaps this home was the place of Jesus' last Passover meal. Mark was probably the "young man" who fled away after Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane (14:51-52).

--A.D. 33-47: Mark became familiar with the preaching of Peter.

--Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch from Jerusalem after the famine visit (Acts 12:25).

--A.D. 48-49: Mark was a "helper" to Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but later deserted them at Perga (Acts 13:13).

--A.D. 50: Paul refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-39). So Barnabas took Mark (his cousin) and went to minister in Cyprus.

--A.D. 57?: He went to Rome.

--A.D. 60-62: Colossians 4:10 indicates Mark was in Rome, and had begun to work his way back into Paul's favor during Paul's imprisonment.

--A.D. 63-64: Mark stayed in Rome and helped Peter (1 Pet. 5:13).

--A.D. 67-68: 2 Timothy 4:11 indicates that by the time Paul faced death, he had complete confidence in Mark. Paul wanted Mark to come to him (presumably he was in Asia Minor).

Other factors about the person Mark:

--a Jewish Christian who lived in Jerusalem with his mother during the early years of the church (nothing is known of his father)

--Peter's calling him "my son" (1 Peter 5:13) may indicate that Mark became a Christian through Peter's influence.

• **When was the book written?**

--50's or early 60's (assuming Mark wrote before Matthew and Luke)

--Another possibility: A.D. 64-68, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem

Where was Mark when he wrote the book?

--Rome

Church tradition says he was "in the regions of Italy" (*Anti-Marcionite Prologue*; NIV Study Bible, p. 1488).

• **Why was the book written?**

--Mark wrote this gospel to present the good news of Jesus to Gentile Christians in Rome.

Q: What evidence in the book suggests that Mark is writing to Gentiles? Look at the following texts and determine the evidence...

1. He explains Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42).

2. He translates Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22).

3. He seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13).

These topics would have been of vital interest to non-Jewish believers facing persecution in Rome.

--The Occasion: Christians in Rome were facing persecution in the period of A.D. 64-67. In A.D. 64, Nero set Rome on fire and blamed it on the Christians. Widespread killing resulted. Mark may have been writing to prepare his readers for this suffering by placing before them the life of our Lord (NIV Study Bible, 1489).

Key: Mark's purpose was basically *pastoral*. What does that mean? B.K.C. (p. 101) states: "The Christians in Rome had already heard and believed the good news of God's saving power...but they needed to hear it again with a new emphasis to catch afresh its implications for their lives in a dissolute and often hostile environment. They needed to understand the nature of discipleship--what it meant to follow Jesus--in light of who Jesus is and what He had done and would keep doing for them."

Discuss: Why do *Christians* need to hear the gospel?

Note: Jerry Bridges says we need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day! Why? Listen to his observation (*Disciplines of Grace*, p. 46), "I believe part of the problem is our tendency to give an unbeliever just enough of the gospel to get him or her to pray a prayer to receive Christ. Then we immediately put the gospel on the shelf, so to speak, and go on to the duties of discipleship."

Notice Mark 1:1.

Q: What does Mark call his book? "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ"--the whole book is called the "beginning."

Q: Why the "beginning"? The NIV Bible says: "The life, death, and resurrection of Christ comprise the "beginning," of which the apostolic preaching in Acts is the continuation." So the life of Jesus is the beginning of the good news. It's not the end of the story. It's chapter one. The story of the early church in Acts is chapter two. In a real sense, we are a chapter, too!

The key is to see that Mark is giving the gospel to Christians. We need to hear the gospel afresh.

- **What is the outline of the book?**

(taken from *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, pp. 101-2)

I. The Title (1:1)

- II. The Preparation for Jesus' Public Ministry (1:2-13)
- III. Jesus' Early Galilean Ministry (1:14-3:6)
- IV. Jesus' Later Galilean Ministry (3:7-6:6a)
- V. Jesus' Ministry in and beyond Galilee (6:6b-8:30)
- VI. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (8:31-10:52)
- VII. Jesus' Ministry in and around Jerusalem (11:1-13:37)
- VIII. Jesus' Suffering and Death in Jerusalem (chaps. 14-15)
- IX. Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead (16:1-8)
- X. Disputed Epilogue (16:9-20)

- **What is the message of the book in one sentence?**

The Gospel of Mark presents the good news of Jesus for non-Jewish people.

- **What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?**

1. *Mark emphasizes discipleship.*

See: 8:34-9:1

Q: What are the conditions of being a disciple presented by Jesus here?

Q: What other conditions do we learn about in the following? In 9:35; 9:37; 9:41; 10:21-23; 10:31; 10:43-45

2. *Mark presents Jesus as the Servant.*

The book highlights Jesus' deeds more than His words. It contains no long discourses and very few parables. Why is that?

Note: Though Mark records fewer teachings of Jesus than the other three, he does emphasize Jesus as teacher. The words "teacher," "teach," "teaching," or "Rabbi" are applied to Jesus 39 times.

3. *Mark also presents Jesus' power as the Son of God.*

Who attested His deity in the following?

--in 1:11 The Father

--in 3:11 The evil spirits

--in 5:7 The demon at Gerasene

--9:7 The Father

--15:39 The Centurion

Discuss: After this brief survey, what effect does the message of the Gospel of Mark have on you? What questions does it raise? What is something you plan to do in light of what you have learned?