

## **Mark -- Good News of Jesus, the Suffering Savior**

### Introduction - Mark 1:1

1. "Gospel" -- A New Kind of Book
  - A. Mark's opening verse gave a title to a new kind of book -- a Gospel.
  - B. The non-inspired titles: "The Gospel According to Mark, Matthew, Luke, John" likely derive from Mark 1:1.
  - C. A Gospel is not an objective, historically focused biography
  - D. They are similar to other "lives" of philosophers and political leaders in ancient times -- they are crafted to tell a story with a goal in mind for the reader.
  - E. They are different in that they focus on Jesus Christ in a unique way -- they unpack the theological significance of Jesus Christ and give us the true Good News.
  - F. They don't simply give us what happened, they tell us what to believe about what happened. They are in essence, preaching materials. They tell the story of God's saving actions in Christ Jesus.
  - G. The Synoptic Gospels are Matthew, Mark, and Luke and it is believed that Matthew & Luke made use of Mark in the writing of their Gospels. They certainly followed his pattern. Each of the four authors had particular emphases in his writing.

DISCUSSION: What are some benefits to the four-fold Gospel that we have in the New Testament? Why four books instead of one? Why are the books similar and different. What can we learn from that? Record your thoughts.

2. Mark -- The First Gospel
  - A. Author -- The Book is anonymous, but from early on it has been attributed to Mark -- the John Mark of Acts 12:12, 12:25, 13:5, 15:36-39, Col. 4:10, Philemon 24, 1 Pet. 5:13, 2 Tim. 4:11

Here's the earliest attribution of the book to Mark, by Papias in AD 140 (but known to us through Eusebius' quote in roughly AD 320):

The Elder (likely John) said this also: Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been one of his followers, but afterwards, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs of his hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no mistake in thus recording some things just as he remembered them. For he was careful of this one thing, to omit none of the things he had heard and to make no untrue statements therein.

Another early tradition (AD 160-180) reads: "Mark declared, who is called 'stump-fingered' because he had short fingers in comparison with the size of the rest of his body. He was Peter's interpreter. After the death of Peter himself he wrote down this same gospel in the regions of Italy."

Interestingly, Mark received relatively little attention in the preserved writings of the church, up until around the 1800s for the most part. There are aspects of Mark which make it difficult, and Augustine assumed Mark just offered up an abbreviated version of Matthew which was certainly larger, and which Augustine thought was written first. (However, often in the sections Mark shares with Matthew, Mark's account is more detailed and longer than Matthew's.)

B. Date -- most put this after the death of Peter in AD 64 and before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. This is our best guess.

This becomes important when we remember the intense persecution of the Christians at the hands of Nero in this time, Paul was martyred in AD 67 near the end of the persecution period. (see 1:12-14, 8:34-38, 10:30-34, 10: 45, 13:9-13)

C. Destination and Place of Writing -- both are likely Rome. Mark is first quoted in 1 Clement & the Shepherd of Hermas, both associated with Rome. Church tradition is almost united in having Mark writing to the Romans from Rome, and Mark is associated with Peter who almost certainly spent the last few years of his life in Rome where he was martyred. Clues in the letter point to a Gentile audience and possibly even a Latin / Roman audience. Grammatical points as well as many explanations of Jewish customs and translations of Aramaic into Greek given in Mark.

D. Purpose

We can only sketch ideas on this and as we study Mark we'll learn if we are right or not in our ideas here.

- 1) To make the Gospel accessible to Gentiles (a missiological aim)
- 2) To encourage those facing persecutions, particularly the beleaguered Christians in Rome.
- 3) To explain and defend the faith -- particularly the nature of Christ being fully man and fully divine (as well as how Jesus fulfilled and superseded the Messianic expectation of the Jews)
- 4) To explain the significance of the cross (almost half the book is devoted to the last week of Christ's life-- the passion week), and Christ's death is foretold in 3:6.

DISCUSSION: What other thoughts come to mind when you think of characteristics or traits of Mark. Are there other themes which come to mind?

3. Theme Verse -- Mark 1:1

A. Gospel (Evangel / Good News, from euangelizomai - to evangelize)

- 1) The "Gospel" is connected by the "as" in vs. 2 to the quotation in vs. 2-3. The intimation there as well as in 1:14-15 is that the "Gospel" is a

fulfillment of something foretold in the Old Testament.

DISCUSSION: Can you think of other places where the "Gospel" is rooted in the Old Testament? Is "the Gospel" really in the Old Testament? Jot down your observations and thoughts.

Rom. 1:1-4 & 1 Cor. 15:1-4 root the Gospel in the OT Scriptures. Initial Gospel sermons stemmed from OT texts (Acts 2:16-36, 13:16-41). Gal. 3:8, Abraham had the gospel preached to him beforehand. 1 Pet. 1:25 ties the word of Isaiah 40 to the gospel preached in the NT era (as does Mk. 1:1 with 1:2-3 - Is. 40 again is quoted) [cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12]. OT "Gospel" texts are Ps. 40:9, 68:11, 96:2, Is. 40:9, 41:27, 52:7, 61:1). The Good News of God's saving reign, and the ushering in of an era of righteousness is foretold in Isaiah. Mark connects Jesus' ministry with the beginning of that fulfillment. "The beginning of the Gospel..." (Already / Not Yet fulfillment)

HOMEWORK: Read or skim through the entire Gospel of Mark looking for the following things.

1) general description of how Mark feels in its style

2) give impressions on how the gospel as a whole flows. Is it a series of bite size chunks that should be parsed away minutely without respect for the whole? Or is there a method to the arrangement of the book?

3) Try to find main themes that find their way in several places of the book (jot down your thoughts as you read / skim through the book to get the big picture).

4) Bonus: You could also trace the theme of "Christ" "Son of David" and "Son of God" through the book and jot down your findings on how often and where these appear, and what we might make of this.