

## INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The Gospel of Mark is the earliest written document on the life of Jesus that is preserved for us today. But Mark is more than a historical account or an attempt at objective biography. It is a story that seeks to draw readers into its world, to lead them to a faith in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God, and to motivate them to a truer discipleship.

Christian tradition has long suggested that the author of the Gospel was “Mark,” a companion of Peter who is mentioned in Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 24 and called “John Mark” in Acts 12:12, 25 and 15:37-39. Peter does occupy a unique role in this Gospel, but nowhere does the author ever explicitly identify himself. We will continue to call this Gospel “Mark’s,” but its actual authorship remains uncertain. Based on the kinds of unrest described in chapter 13 which are consistent with Nero’s persecution of Christians and the Jewish revolt against Rome which culminated with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D, most scholars conclude that this Gospel was written sometime in the late 60’s A.D. There are many factors which point to the likelihood that Mark was composed for a community outside of Palestine. Christian tradition has suggested Rome as its originating location, but a number of other places within the Roman Empire (Syria? Alexandria?) could also be possible.

Most scholars also agree that Mark served as a source for the Gospels attributed to Matthew and Luke. Though these other two Gospels, along with John, may provide a more polished and fuller account of Jesus’ ministry, Mark remains, I think, as the most compelling story which hopes to draw its readers into a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God who suffered and died for us. This Gospel also highlights the nature of discipleship lived out in the shadow of Christ’s cross and what it means for us as followers of Jesus to be “MARKed for Life!”



## OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

CH.	IMPORTANT EVENTS	GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING
1	Preface; John the Baptist Baptism; Temptation Start of Jesus ministry; call of 4 disciples; miracles	Judea in and around Galilee
2	Heals paralytic; conflicts with authorities	
3	death plot by Pharisees & Herodians; calling the 12; house divided saying	
4	Teaching parables; stills storm	
5	Legion exorcised; Jairus' daughter healed	
6	Rejected at home; 12 sent out; death of John the Baptist; 5000 fed; walks on water	
7	Pharisees and scribes; Syro~phoenician woman and deaf man healed	
8	4000 fed; blind man healed Peter's confession 1st passion prediction (8:31)	
9	Transfiguration; on Elijah; exorcism 2nd passion prediction (9:31)	
10	Regarding divorce; children; rich man 3rd passion prediction (10:32) blind Bartimaeus healed	to Judea
11	Entry into Jerusalem clearing Temple; plot of chief priests, scribes, and elders	in Jerusalem
12	Parable of vineyard; on paying tax to Caesar; regarding resurrection; poor widow	
13	Apocalyptic Discourse	
14	Preparing for Passover; Passover supper Arrest in garden; Jewish trial; Peter's denial	
15	Trial before Pilate Crucifixion & burial	
16	Empty tomb	to Galilee

## A QUIZ ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

WARNING: These are all trick questions!

### According to the Gospel of Mark:

- 1) How many wise men came to see the baby Jesus?
- 2) Was Joseph, Jesus' father, a carpenter?
- 3) How were Jesus and John the Baptist related?
- 4) What did Jesus look like? Did he have a beard? How old was he?
- 5) Where was Jesus when he delivered his sermon which includes the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer?
- 6) Did Jesus claim to be the Good Shepherd?
- 7) What color hair did Judas have?
- 8) How many nails were used in crucifying Jesus?
- 9) How many times did Jesus speak from the cross? What were his dying words?
- 10) To whom did Jesus first appear after his resurrection?



## MARKED FOR LIFE!

Bible Study on the Gospel of Mark

### RESOURCES FOR STUDY

A recommended study Bible:

- *The HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV)*

Commentaries on Mark

- *Mark* by Donald H. Juel (Augsburg, 1990)
- *Mark* by Lamar Williamson (John Knox, 1983)
- *Mark* by John Donahue & Daniel Harrington. (Sacra Pagina: Glazier/Liturgical Press, 2002.)

Other interesting and useful resources:

- *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* by David Rhoads and Donald Michie (Fortress, 1999)
- *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* by Janice Capel Anderson & Stephen D. Moore (Fortress, 2008)
- *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* by Donald H. Juel (Fortress, 1994)
- *Marked for Life: A Daily Reading Guide to the Gospel of Mark* by Mark Vitalis Hoffman ([www.CrossMarks.com](http://www.CrossMarks.com))

For these and other recommended books, check:

[www.scrollandscreen.com/biblestudyresources/bestmarkbooks.htm](http://www.scrollandscreen.com/biblestudyresources/bestmarkbooks.htm)

### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

- 1) This Changes Everything: Introduction to the Gospel of Mark
- 2) The Plot Thickens: Conflict and Controversy in Jesus' Ministry
- 3) With Friends Like These...: The Disciples in Mark
- 4) Will the Real Jesus Please Rise Up? The Secret of Jesus' Identity
- 5) Another Fine Mess: The Crucifixion of Jesus
- 6) When Words Fail: The Resurrection of Jesus

### ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- 1) There is no account of Jesus' birth in Mark. In Matthew 2 we hear about the wise men, but it doesn't say there how many there were.
- 2) Joseph is never even mentioned in Mark. In Mark 6.3 it says that Jesus was a carpenter and identifies him as "son of Mary." This is a very unusual designation in a patriarchal culture where we would have expected "son of Joseph."
- 3) Mark does not give any description of the relationship between Jesus and John. In Luke 1.36 we are told that Mary and Elizabeth, John's mother, are related.
- 4) No physical description of Jesus is ever given. It is likely that he had Semitic features and had a beard. According to Luke 3.23, Jesus was about 30 when he began his public ministry.
- 5) Mark does not have the Beatitudes or the Lord's Prayer (though see 11.25 and 14.36) nor the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) or Plain (Luke) in which they appear in those Gospels.
- 6) Only in John does Jesus claim to be the Good Shepherd. In Mark, only once in 14.62 does Jesus explicitly say "I am" to the question of whether he is the "Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One."
- 7) Judas is not described at all in the New Testament. Later, legendary material claimed that he had red hair. (In case you get this question in "Trivial Pursuit")
- 8) Mark provides no description of how Jesus was crucified. How Jesus was crucified is probably how the other thieves were crucified. In John 20, we hear about the nail marks in the hands and wound in the side. Luke 24.39 perhaps suggests that Jesus received nails in the feet as well.
- 9) The "Seven Last Words" is a composite of all four Gospels. In Mark, the last thing Jesus says is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- 10) The women who go to the tomb are told that Jesus was raised and will appear to his disciples and Peter in Galilee, but Mark ends at 16.8 and no account of a resurrection appearance is given.