

The Gospel According to Mark

Jesus. Servant. Master.

Introduction

Author & Date of Writing:

The Gospel According To Mark was written sometime between 55 and 65 A.D with his primary audience being the Gentiles, especially the citizens of Rome. It is the shortest of the four Gospels but it had a powerful impact and was a great encouragement to the suffering Christians during the time of persecution under Nero (A.D. 64 – 67).

Mark's Jewish name was John and was referred to as John Mark according to Acts 12:12, 25. His name means "*Yahweh has been gracious*" and his Latin surname was Mark meaning "*A large hammer*".

Mark lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary (not to be confused with Mary the mother of Jesus) and according to Acts 12 their home was a meeting place for the early church. You may remember when King Herod was harassing the church and killed James the brother of John, the first church martyr. Apparently this pleased the Jews, so Herod had Peter arrested, thrown into prison and intended to kill him the next day! However, constant prayer was offered to God for Peter's release by the church and he was miraculously delivered out of prison. Guess where Peter went? He went over to Mark's home where the believers were praying! He knocked on the door but they couldn't believe it was Peter released from prison!

We also know from Colossians 4:10 that Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. The first appearance of Mark in the New Testament is found in Acts 12 when Mark went with the Apostle Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch. He started off with Paul and Barnabas on this first missionary journey but for some reason Mark left them at Perga and returned to Jerusalem.

Paul was not happy about this so when they were planning their second missionary journey (Acts 15:37) and Barnabas wanted to take along Mark with them Paul said no way! The contention was so sharp between Paul and Barnabas they parted in different directions. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus and Paul chose Silas and departed to Syria and Cilicia, each strengthening the churches.

Now apparently Paul had forgiven Mark because in 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul says, "*Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.*"

It is also believed that Peter led Mark to the Lord and mentored him in the faith. Church tradition says that because of the close relationship between Peter and Mark (1 Peter 5:13 refers to Mark as “*my son*”) the gospel of Mark reflects the personal experience and witness of Simon Peter. Some even calling the gospel of Mark the gospel of Peter.

Purpose for Writing:

Matthew presents Jesus as the King. Luke presents Him as the Perfect Man. John presents Him as the Son of God. And Mark portrays Jesus as the Perfect Servant of God. “*For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).*”

In chapters 1 – 10 Mark reveals Jesus as the Servant living His life in service to mankind and in chapters 11 – 16 he portrays Him as a Servant willing to give His life in sacrifice for mankind.

In the gospel of Mark it is interesting that he has no genealogy or family history unlike the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Mark simply begins with declaring the deity of Christ with an un-wavering statement “*Jesus Christ, the Son of God*”.

It is also interesting that Mark only refers to two Old Testament references. He quotes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Malachi predicted the coming of the messenger who would precede the Lord and prepare the people for His arrival, while Isaiah tells us who this messenger would be “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness*” we know him as John the Baptist.

Mark was not trying to prove certain statements or prophecies concerning Jesus. His only objective in writing was to tell clearly the fact that Jesus is the “*Son of God*”. That He was a Perfect Servant of God. Mark’s focus was on how Jesus lived and demonstrated His love to those around Him. In fact, it was at the end of the life of Jesus as He hung on the cross and He cried out and exhaled His final breath a Roman soldier said, “*Truly this Man was the Son of God*” (Mark 15:39).

Fascinating facts about the Gospel of Mark:

- Mark is the shortest and most graphic of the four Gospels
- Mark was the first of the four Gospels to be written
- Mark’s Gospel records about eighteen of Jesus’ parables
- Almost forty percent of Mark’s Gospel is devoted to a detailed account of the last eight days of Jesus’ life, climaxing in His resurrection.

- Mark's Gospel contains only two Old Testament references
- Mark's Gospel records fewer of Christ's teachings than any of the other three Gospels
- Only in Mark's Gospel are we told that Jesus was a "carpenter"
- Because only Mark's Gospel records the story of the young man who fled away naked, many believe that it is reference to Mark himself
- Mark was not one of the main disciples, and the acceptance of his Gospel account stems from the knowledge that Peter supplied Mark with much of the information used in writing this Gospel

Key Scriptures:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1)

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:34 – 37)

"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9: 35)

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)