The Gospel of Mark

The Life of Mark

The Gospel of Mark was most likely written by a man named John Mark (John was his Jewish name and Mark was his Roman name). We usually just call him Mark or Marcus. According to Colossians 4:10, Mark was a cousin of Barnabas, one of the preachers who accompanied Paul in his travels. Mark was the son of a woman named Mary. The disciples were meeting in her home when Peter was released from prison (Acts 12:12). Mary may also have been one of the women who went to Jesus’ tomb on the morning of His resurrection.

As far as we know, Mark was not a disciple while Jesus was on earth. He became a close friend of Simon Peter, who calls him “my son” in 1 Peter 5:13. He must have learned much about Jesus from Peter and also from the Apostle Paul. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first missionary journey. He later split off from Barnabas when Barnabas had a disagreement with Paul. Later, Mark’s relationship with Paul was restored, and they traveled together again.

The Book of Mark

The Gospel of Mark includes the most stories about Jesus. This Gospel begins with a short description of John the Baptist and then moves right into Jesus’ public ministry. Mark tells us about Jesus and His disciples, devotes several chapters to Jesus’ death and resurrection, and ends with a passage about Jesus and His followers after the resurrection.

Vocabulary Words

- Gentile (ˈjen ti l): someone who is not a Jew

Get Into the Bible

The Background of Mark

Read Your Bible – Mark 1:1-3

Put your initials on the line when you have finished reading the passage. ______

Answer the questions.

1. According to Mark 1:1, around what person is this Gospel centered? __________________________

2. Read Matthew 3:1-3. Who is the person called the “voice of one crying in the wilderness” in Mark 1:3? __________________________
Mark was written specifically for Gentile Christians, followers of Christ who did not follow the Jewish laws of the Old Testament. Mark shows Jesus as a man of action, a servant meeting the needs of the people. Mark’s Gospel includes only one long sermon; most of the book focuses on the acts of Jesus. Mark shows his readers that Jesus felt the same emotions we do. As we read Mark, we sense how deeply Jesus related to the people He met.

A unique quality of Mark is its briefness in comparison to the other Gospels. For example, the book of Luke spends two chapters and a total of 132 verses leading up to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Mark describes Jesus’ baptism and temptation in only five verses before he continues with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The words straightway and immediately are used more than thirty times in Mark, conveying the sense that Jesus lived an active, purposeful life. A key word to remember from Mark is immediately.

**Jewish Customs**

The book of Mark describes several Jewish customs that would not have been easily understood by people who were not Jews.

The Old Testament book of Leviticus commands the Jews to wash to purify themselves before taking part in holy acts. Mark 7:3, 4 explains this process. God also presented the Jews with lists of “clean” animals they were allowed to eat and “unclean” animals they were not allowed to eat.

The Sadducees were a group of Jews who did not share other Jews’ beliefs in many supernatural things such as Heaven and angels. Many Sadducees were priests. Mark 12:18 mentions that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.

**Aramaic**

Aramaic was the native language of many Jews at the time of Christ. The book of Mark uses several Aramaic terms that would have been unfamiliar to Mark’s non-Jewish readers. One is Golgotha, which means “the place of a skull,” according to Mark 15:22.

Aramaic is very similar to the Hebrew of the Old Testament. In fact, some of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic. Chapters 4 through 7 of Ezra and 2 through 7 of Daniel were originally written in Aramaic. The name Aramaic comes from the old name for Syria, Aram. When the Jewish people lived in exile in Babylon, they learned Aramaic. Later, in the decades before Jesus was born, Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the everyday language of the Jewish people in Palestine. There are many Aramaic words and phrases in the Gospels, including some of Jesus’ final words on the cross.

Here is a sample of Aramaic writing:
Lesson 2

Understanding the Text

Match each word or phrase with its meaning according to the text or sidebar. Not all answers will be used.

3. ______ Mark
4. ______ unclean
5. ______ Gentile
6. ______ Simon Peter

Complete the exercises.

7. Circle the letter of a key word or phrase to remember from Mark.
   A. kingdom of God
   B. immediately
   C. light
   D. soon

8. Circle the letter of the statement that is true about the book of Mark.
   A. Mark was written especially for Gentile Christians.
   B. Mark portrays Jesus as a man of action and a servant.
   C. Mark is shorter than the other Gospels.
   D. All of the above.

9. Cross out the one that is not a major section of the book of Mark.
   A. description of Jesus’ baptism and temptation
   B. Jesus’ death and resurrection
   C. Jesus’ ministry with His disciples
   D. the time after Jesus’ resurrection, before He went back to Heaven

Look up each reference and complete the idea.

    B. According to the information in the sidebar, the words you wrote are in the ________________ language.

11. Mark 7:3, 4. The Jewish people always ______________________ before they eat.

12. Mark 12:18. The ______________________ say there is no resurrection.
**Bible Memory**

Write the memory verse and its reference. Memorize the verse.

13. ________________________________

____________________________________

**Think It Through**

1 When Jesus was talking to the Pharisees about the custom of washing their hands, He said it is not the things from outside that defile a man or make him unclean, but rather the things that are inside of a man and then come out.

14. Read Mark 7:14-23 and explain what Jesus meant. ________________________________

**Review**

Circle T if the statement is true and F if it is false. Correct false statements by writing the italicized part correctly on the line.

15. T  F Jesus is the Messiah, the One whom God anointed to deliver His people and establish God’s kingdom.

____________________________________

16. T  F A major purpose of the book of Matthew was to explain Jesus’ eternal existence.

____________________________________

17. T  F The book of Matthew starts off immediately telling of Jesus’ birth.

____________________________________

18. T  F A key phrase for the book of Matthew is kingdom of God.

____________________________________

**Answer the questions.**

19. What is another name for Matthew? ________________________________

20. What is a word that means “good news”? ________________________________
Lesson 2

21. What two commands did Jesus give His disciples near the end of the Gospel of Matthew?

22. Over what two realms does Jesus have all power?

Complete the sentences.

23. Matthew emphasized that Jesus is both ______________ and ______________.

24. Because of His position, Jesus has ______________ ______________ over His people.

25. The book of Matthew has three sections: Jesus’ ______________, Jesus’ ______________, and the ______________.
The Gospel of Luke

Read Your Bible – *Luke 1:1-4*

Put your initials on the line when you have finished reading the passage. 

**Answer the questions.**

1. To what person was the book of Luke addressed, according to Luke 1:3?
   
2. According to Luke 1:4, why was this book important for the reader?

Vocabulary Words

- **ascension** (ə sen′ shən): a going up, in this case into Heaven
- **province** (prä′ vəns): a geographical region similar to a state

The Background of Luke

*The Life of Luke*

Did you know there were doctors in Bible times? We know that the Bible writer Luke was a doctor. Not much else is known about him because he almost never talked about himself in his writing. We do know that he was Gentile, but we do not know anything about how he came to faith in Christ. Luke was Paul’s close friend and traveling companion. In Colossians 4, Paul calls him “the beloved physician.” He was with Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome, and this is possibly when he did his writing.

Luke’s vocabulary and writing style show that he was well educated. He used fluent Greek, and he did not make many references to Old Testament Scriptures as he would have if he had been Jewish. Although he was not an eyewitness of Jesus’ life, he investigated carefully and talked to those who had been with Jesus. He emphasizes dates and well-known historical figures to place his account in history and give it reliability. He includes several songs of praise that are not recorded in the other Gospels—in fact, over half of the book includes details we would not know if it had not been for Luke’s research.

*The Book of Luke*

While the author says the book of Luke is written specifically for Theophilus (θεόφιλος), it is helpful to any reader who wants to learn...
Lesson 3

Where Jesus Lived

Jesus spent His life in the land of Israel, which in His day was divided into three provinces: Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Although Joseph and Mary were actually from Nazareth in Galilee, they traveled south to Bethlehem in Judea, where Jesus was born. The family later returned to Nazareth, so Jesus spent most of His growing-up years in Galilee.

Jesus began His ministry in Galilee. Luke records several miracles Jesus performed in a town called Capernaum in Galilee: He cast out an unclean spirit, He healed Simon Peter’s mother-in-law and a centurion’s servant, and He brought Jairus’s daughter back to life. On the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calmed a storm and filled Peter’s nets with fish.

We learn about Jesus’ time in Samaria from John’s Gospel, which tells about Jesus giving water to a woman at a well in Samaria. Jesus only passed through Samaria and did not spend much time there.

When the time of His crucifixion came near, Jesus went south toward Jerusalem in Judea. Jesus preached in various parts of Judea. In Jericho, He healed a blind man and ate with Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Finally, Jesus was crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem.

about the life of Christ. Luke states in the beginning of Chapter 1 that his purpose is to give an orderly, well-informed version of Christ’s life.

Among the four Gospels, Luke’s is the most complete account of Christ’s life. He begins with four chapters telling about Jesus’ early life. Luke then focuses on Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Later he records Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven. No other book of the Bible gives as many details about the personal life of Jesus as Luke does.

Luke is also unique among the Gospels for portraying how much attention Jesus gives to all classes of people. Luke tells of Jesus ministering to all groups of people, including Samaritans, publicans, and sinners—people normally looked down on by the Jews. He also frequently mentions women and children—two other classes of people often ignored by the Jews.

Luke was careful to show his readers that the favorite name Jesus used for Himself was Son of man. This title emphasizes Jesus’ ability to identify with people and have compassion on them. Remember Luke’s phrase, Son of man.
**Understanding the Text**

**Complete the sentences.**

3. Luke was a ______________________ who came to faith in Christ.

4. The book of Luke repeatedly calls Jesus the ______________________ to show how He identified with people and had compassion on them.


6. Jesus spent most of His life in the provinces of ______________________, ______________________, and ______________________.

7. The writer of Colossians calls Luke the ______________________.


9. Luke’s Gospel gives the most complete record of Jesus’ ______________________.

**Read the following Scriptures. Then use the map on page 12 to tell in which province each incident occurred.**


11. _____ John 4:5

12. _____ Luke 4:16

**Bible Memory**

**Write the memory verse from memory, including its reference.**

13. __________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________

**Think It Through**

14. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is often called *the Son of man* (Luke 6:5; 9:22, 26, 44, 56). Yet, in other places, He is called *the Son of God* (Mark 1:11; 5:7). How can these both be true?
Lesson 3

Review

Match each word or phrase with its description.

15. _____ the book of Matthew
   A. “the voice of one crying in the wilderness”
16. _____ Jesus, as seen in Mark
   B. the teaching Gospel
17. _____ Gentile
   C. written for Gentile Christians
18. _____ the book of Mark
   D. tax collector, also called Levi
19. _____ John the Baptist
   E. immediately
20. _____ often-used word in the book of Mark
   F. Good News
21. _____ Matthew
   G. non-Jew
22. _____ Gospel
   H. language of the Jews during New Testament times
23. _____ Aramaic
   I. man of action

Complete the exercises.

24. The book of Mark is ________________ than the other Gospels.

25. What part of Jesus’ life is not a major section of the book of Mark?

_________________________________________________________________________
Read Your Bible – John 20:30, 31
Put your initials on the line when you have finished reading the passage. ______

Complete the sentences.

1. John’s purpose in writing was to show his readers that Jesus is the ____________, the ____________ of ____________.

2. A person who believes in Jesus as the Christ has _________________.

Vocabulary Word

synoptic (sə nāp’ tik): seeing from the same point of view; a term applied to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke

The Background of John

The Life of John

The Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John, called by Jesus to be one of the twelve disciples. John was the son of Zebedee and Salome and was also the brother of the Apostle James. John may have been a follower of John the Baptist before Jesus called him.

John was a fisherman along with his father and brother James. After he began following Jesus, John became very close to Jesus. He is the disciple referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in John 21:20. John was with Jesus at some of the important moments in Christ’s life. He was with Jesus at His transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and at the cross.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven, John worked with the early church. He is mentioned several times in Acts as preaching and traveling with Peter. John wrote three epistles that appear as First, Second, and Third John in the New Testament. He also wrote the book of Revelation.

The Book of John

The book of John is different from the other three Gospels, which are called the Synoptic Gospels. The other Gospels view Jesus’ life from a similar point of view. They all follow a similar pattern of organization. The Synoptic Gospels record Jesus’ acts in sequence from the beginning of His ministry to the end, although they do not
always follow exactly the same order. John, however, focuses more on the message of Jesus. He tells us about events in Jesus’ life only to provide a backdrop for sharing Jesus’ teaching. Even the parables and sermons in John are different from those given in the Synoptic Gospels.

While the other Gospels tell of one time Jesus went to Jerusalem, John speaks of four. It also records several relationships Jesus had that are not mentioned in the other Gospels. These include His meetings with Nicodemus (nik’ ə dě’ məs) and the Samaritan woman at the well. Instead of giving readers much information about Jesus’ human background, John’s Gospel explains His eternal existence as God. Many unique names are given to Jesus in John, including *the Word, the Lamb of God, the Bread, the Way, the Life, the Door,* and *the Light.* Seven times Jesus calls Himself *I Am,* the name by which God revealed Himself in the Old Testament. Key words to remember in John are *life* and *light.*

John reported the signs and wonders that Jesus performed so that readers can be convinced that Jesus is the Son of God. John shows that only through Jesus can believers have eternal life. (John used the word *believe* or a form of *believe* ninety-eight times in his Gospel!) Although John does not name a specific audience, his Gospel definitely targets those who are spiritually thirsty; it tells them that they can be filled with light, life, and love.

### An Overview of the Gospels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outline</strong></td>
<td>I. Background II. Ministry III. Death and Resurrection</td>
<td>I. Background II. Ministry III. Death and Resurrection</td>
<td>I. Background II. Ministry III. Death and Resurrection</td>
<td>I. Background II. Jesus is God’s Son III. Jesus in Jerusalem IV. Death and Resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique Characteristics or Emphases</strong></td>
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<td>Jesus a Man of Action; Most Brief Account</td>
<td>Most Complete Life of Christ; Jesus Ministers to All Classes</td>
<td>Through Jesus We Have Eternal Life</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>24 Chapters</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Portrays Christ As ...</strong></td>
<td>King and Messiah</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Son of man</td>
<td>Son of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

**Complete the family information for the Apostle John.**

3. John’s parents were _________________ and _________________.

4. John’s brother was _________________.

**Complete the exercises.**

5. John 21:20 describes John as a disciple whom ___________________________.

6. Give three important times when John was with Jesus.
   A. ____________________________________
   B. ____________________________________
   C. ____________________________________

7. Give the other books of the Bible that John wrote. ___________________________________

8. To convince readers that Jesus is the Son of God, John reported the ___________________________ and _________________________, that Jesus performed.

9. Key words to remember for the book of John are _____________________ and _____________________.

10. In John’s Gospel, Jesus is called the Way, the Door, and the Bread. Give three other descriptive names used for Jesus in the book of John.
    A. ____________________________________
    B. ____________________________________
    C. ____________________________________

11. Which name of Jesus is the same as a name God used for Himself? ___________________

12. What does the book of John promise to those who are spiritually thirsty? ________________
    ____________________________________

13. The term synoptic tells us that Matthew, Mark, and Luke see Jesus’ life from a similar
    ____________________________________.

14. According to the chart on page 16, what is the unique emphasis of John’s Gospel?
    ____________________________________
Lesson 4

**Bible Memory**

Write John 20:31 without looking at the verse.

15. ________________________________________________________________

**Think It Through**

16. Use the chart on page 16 to write at least three items comparing or contrasting the four Gospels. To help you get started, look at the outlines of the Gospels. Which Gospel’s outline is different from the others?

**Review**

Correct each false statement by crossing out the italicized word or phrase and writing the correct word.

17. Jesus spent most of His life in the provinces of Galilee, *Nazareth*, and Judea.


19. *Matthew* is called “the beloved physician.”

20. The book of *Mark* gives the most complete account of the personal life of Christ.

21. The book of *Matthew* shows Jesus reaching out to all classes of people.

22. A key phrase for the book of Luke is *Son of the Kingdom*.

23. *Mark* was a Gentile.

24. Luke’s Gospel was addressed to *all Jews*. 