

BIBLE 902

THE GOSPELS

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You have examined the first book of the New Testament, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Although you will study each of the Gospels under the same headings, you will discover that

each is very different as you consider the writer of the Gospel, the occasion of the writing, and the content of the book.

II. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Although the Gospel According to Mark is second in the New Testament order, Bible authorities generally agree that Mark's Gospel was the first written report of Christ's life

included in the Bible. In this section we shall look closely at the details concerning Mark's life and the things which influenced him to write the way he did.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able:

1. To name the writer of the second Gospel and to tell about his origin, occupation, and associations.
2. To tell the approximate date when Mark's Gospel was written, name the audience Mark had in mind, and tell his purpose for writing.
3. To state the theme of Mark's record.
4. To tell about Mark's style and how it differed from the other three writers.
5. To discuss the major content of Mark's Gospel and how it compares and contrasts with the other three accounts.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

attendant (u ten' dunt). One who accompanies another and serves him.

centurion (sen tûr' ē un). A Roman military officer who commanded a hundred men.

concise (kun sîs'). Brief and to the point.

graphic (graf' ik). Described in picture language that is very vivid.

interpret (in tēr' prit). To explain the meaning of; to translate from one language to another.

temperament (tem' pur u munt). Frame of mind; nature of disposition.



WRITER OF THE GOSPEL

We shall look now at Mark's *origin*, his *occupation*, and his *associations* with other people.



**Read Acts 12:11, 12;
I Peter 5:13; Colossians 4:10.**

Origin. From the preceding verses we learn much about Mark. We are told that his first name was John and his surname was Mark. Actually, John was his Jewish name, and Mark was his Roman name. He is also called Marcus in the New Testament. His mother's name was Mary, and he was probably from a fairly wealthy

family since they had a house big enough to accommodate many people. It was probably a favorite meeting place in Jerusalem for the early Christians, and they gathered there to pray for Peter's deliverance from Herod's prison. We also learn that Mark was the son of Barnabas' sister, which made him a nephew of Barnabas. Peter called Marcus his son, which probably means that Peter was his spiritual father, who led him to faith in Jesus Christ. A close look at Mark's background suggests that he was at the hub of activity in the early Christian church of Jerusalem.

Having observed Mark's *background*, we shall now look briefly at his *occupation*.



Read Acts 11:25-30; 12:25—13:13.

Occupation. We know nothing of the work Mark did before he began to travel with his Uncle Barnabas and the Apostle Paul. He was likely a very young man when they decided to take him with them as their "minister." Here the word *minister* means **attendant**. Probably Mark did small acts of service for them on their journey while gaining good experience in missionary work.

We have learned something about the *origin* and *occupation* of Mark. We shall turn our attention now to his *associations*.



Read Acts 15:36-41; Philemon 23, 24, II Timothy 4:11.

Associations. Although Mark started out well as an attendant to Paul and Barnabas, either he became homesick early in the first missionary journey, or else he could not take the rough going. He returned to Jerusalem just shortly after they set out. As a result, Paul was not so eager to take him on the second missionary trip as Barnabas was. The decision caused a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas and Barnabas took Mark with him but Paul went on a separate journey with Silas as his new companion. Paul later relented and admitted that Mark was profitable to him for the ministry. He called Mark a "fellow labourer" along with Epaphras; Aristarchus; Demas; and Luke, the writer of the third Gospel account. Apparently, then, Mark matured over the years and ministered as a co-laborer with Paul, Timothy, and Peter. During his association with Peter, Mark probably learned many of the facts about Christ's ministry, which later became a part of his Gospel record.



Complete these sentences.

- 2.1 Mark's first name was a. _____ and his surname was b. _____.
- 2.2 His Roman name was a. _____ and his Jewish name was b. _____.
- 2.3 His mother's name was a. _____ and they lived in b. _____.
- 2.4 Mark was a _____ of Barnabas.
- 2.5 Peter called Mark his _____.
- 2.6 Mark acted as minister or a. _____ to Paul and Barnabas on their b. _____ missionary journey.
- 2.7 On their second separate missionary journeys, Barnabas took a. _____ and Paul took b. _____.
- 2.8 Later in his ministry, Paul refers to Mark as his _____.



Answer these questions in complete sentences.

- 2.9 Why did Paul not want to take Mark on the second missionary journey? _____

- 2.10 With what people was Mark associated in the days of the early Christian church?

OCCASION OF THE WRITING

Having seen some facts about the writer of this Gospel, let us look now at the *occasion* of its writing, noting the *date*, *recipients*, and *purpose*.

Date. Bible scholars generally agree that this narrative was the first Gospel written. Therefore, it must have a fairly early date, definitely before the destruction of Jerusalem. It was probably penned around A.D. 50, and this date would make it not only the earliest Gospel but also one of the first New Testament books written.

Recipients. The fact that this Gospel was written for Gentiles (probably Romans) rather than Jews, is obvious from several factors. Fewer Old Testament quotations are in Mark—only half as many as in Matthew. Mark **interpreted** a number of Aramaic words, including *Talitha cumi* (5:41); *Ephphatha* (7:34); *Abba* (14:36); *Golgotha* (15:22); and Jesus' words on the cross, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*" (15:34). He explained such Jewish customs as the washing of hands (7:2-3) and the value of two mites (12:42). Mark also gave a geographical description of the Mount of Olives (13:3). No Jew would need an explanation of that well-known landmark. Mark was

careful to tell when the Passover lamb was killed (14:12) and when the preparation was made (15:42). This record was evidently written for people outside Palestine who were not Jews.

Other interesting facts are Mark's failure to mention the Jewish Law or any parables of a Jewish nature. The long discourses on which Matthew majored are also absent. Mark's Greek words and phrases are definitely not in the polished grammatical style that either Luke or Paul used. His Gospel would appeal largely to the slaves and working classes of his day. Rather, this record is one of action, with an emphasis on service, power, and victory. This indication is seen in some of the words he used regularly, such as *straightway*, *immediately*, or *forthwith* (forty-one times); *rule over* (twenty-seven times); and *power* or *authority* (ten times). All these reasons suggest that Mark's Gospel was directed to Gentiles, probably in the city of Rome.



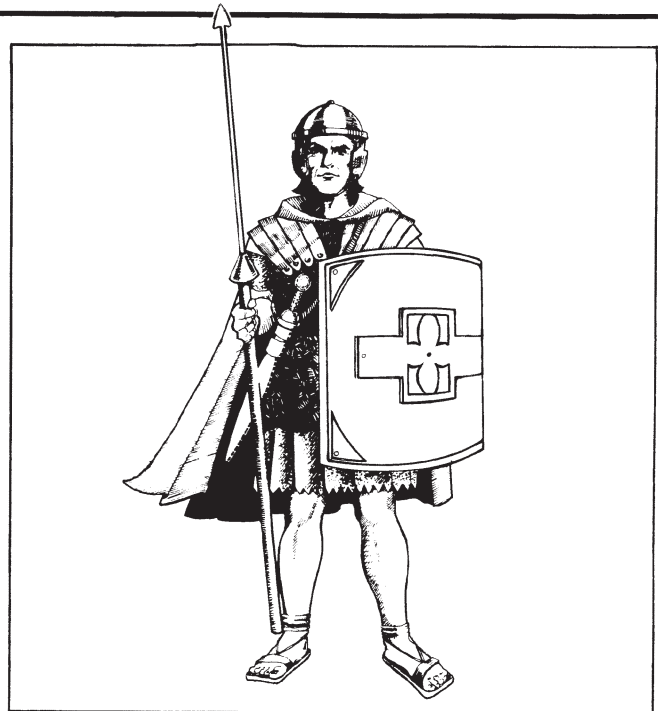
Complete this activity.

2.11 Give four reasons why Mark's Gospel would appeal to the Romans.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Closely related to the *date* of writing and *recipients* of this Gospel is the *purpose* for which it was composed.

Purpose. The preceding discussion suggests that Mark's reason for writing this account was a desire to win the Gentile Romans to Christ. Since they were people of action, Mark emphasized the movements and accomplishments of Jesus. His short, to-the-point record of the brief, but eventful, life of the Lord would appeal to the lower and middle classes, who were involved in practical business affairs, military operations, and much movement and travel throughout the known world. To them Mark presented the person of Jesus, moving from place to place without ado, but working wonders for the common people wherever He went. His Gospel would certainly have had a remarkable effect on the busy, active Romans.



Roman Soldier