

MARK---Introduction

Most theologians believe The Gospel of Mark is the original Gospel that Matthew and Luke used as a source. Between Matthew and Luke they reproduced all but a few verses of Mark. The Gospel of Mark gives us the original systematic historical account of the life and words of Jesus. Mark was not one of the original Apostles, but he was an eyewitness in Jerusalem of many of the works and words of Jesus. Mark accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey, and later served the Apostle Peter in Rome. When Peter wrote his first epistle, he affectionately called Mark his son in 1 Peter 5:13. The next generation church Fathers wrote that Mark became Peter's scribe and wrote accurately all that Peter remembered of the things said or done by the Lord.

Mark was writing his letter to encourage the Gentile church in Rome. Mark is unique in that he has no genealogy, no birth narrative, and only two of Jesus' longer sermons. Mark is the action Gospel, and Christ's life is portrayed as incredibly fast paced and action packed. His favorite word is "immediately". It is the shortest Gospel, but has the most miracles. Jesus is surrounded by crowds, worn out by demands, and constantly moving from one story to the next. Perhaps the key verse in the Gospels which gives the purpose statement of Jesus Christ is Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many."

Don't forget that all the "books" of the New Testament were actually letters written by first century witnesses to Christ. Typically the letters were written by the Apostles of Christ that were eyewitnesses to everything Jesus did and said, but in the case of Mark, he was not an Apostle. Mark is considered to have written his gospel with the authority of both Peter and Paul, both of whom he served and spent considerable time with. Many theologians believe that at the time of this letter, Peter was being threatened with martyrdom in Rome, so it became important to record his version of the life of Jesus, therefore Peter's close disciple and scribe, Mark wrote this letter that the church later affixed the title The Gospel of Mark.

Gospel

In Greek, the word for gospel was euangelizo. The word was originally used for the proclamation of good news of victory from the battlefield. We get our word evangelism from this Greek word that Christians began using for the good news proclamation of Jesus Christ dying for our sins. The "good news" was that we have victory in Jesus. In a worldly view, good news means we made money, or a war is over, or someone is cured of an illness. In political terms, politicians promise full employment, a New Deal, the Great Society, the New World Order, and "happy days are here again". Reality tells us that nothing changes—the oppressed remain, the poor are downtrodden, hatred and prejudice continue, and the next war is just around the corner. The true gospel or "good news" about Jesus is radical, explosive. Our sin is emphasized as our real problem that

has been solved by Jesus. We can be set free from sin because of the atoning work of Christ on the cross. In Christ, our new relationship to God is based on unmerited forgiveness and blessing. In the Gospel of Mark, religious experts rejected Jesus because He did not fit any preconceived notions of what the Messiah (Christ) would be or do. Even His disciples had a desire for power, self glory, and personal ambition. The religious leaders wanted a Messiah who was above suffering, and who would give them worldly peace and prosperity. The Messiah in Mark is a rude awakening to those interested only in themselves, and even His own disciples and family tried to mold Christ into their own images by telling Him who He is and what they expected Him to do.

Mark 1:1-11

The original title of the book was the first phrase, “The Beginning of the Gospel”. It was anonymous, but all the early church fathers from 110 to 200 AD attributed it to Mark. All the early churches from Rome, Ephesus, and Alexandria used the title Mark. The beginning of Mark’s story is in accord with Isaiah’s promise of the messenger, the forerunner, John the Baptist. The gospel is connected to the Old Testament and the promises of God, so long before John the Baptist introduced Jesus, Isaiah preached the good news. Mark began with the introduction of Jesus as Messiah by telling the story of the baptism of Jesus by John. We learn immediately who Jesus is from God’s perspective in verse 11. To Mark, his gospel or good news is the narrative presentation of the entire Christ event. He presents the life, ministry, sacrificial death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus as the good news to all who will believe.

Mark’s purpose was to show that Jesus, as the Christ, the Son of God, was also the Son of Man who came to serve, suffer, and die for our sins.

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