

The Gospel of Mark Lesson 1 – Introduction

Class Introduction

Why study the second Gospel?

- 1) There is nothing better in this world than to know Jesus!
⁷But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may **know** Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:7-11)
- 2) We do not want to have this asked of us like the apostle Philip.
⁹Jesus said* to him, **“Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip?”** (John 14:9)
- 3) That we may be able to be obedient to Jesus’ great commission.
¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**
(Matt. 28:18-20)

Introduction to the Gospels (Note: Adapted from Gordon Kemble’s NT Survey Class Notes)

- A. “Gospel” – The English word "gospel" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *godspeel*, *god* meaning good, and *speel* meaning story or news. The Greek word *evangelion*, which means "good news" is also translated gospel. Each Gospel simply has the title “According to ...” in the Greek. The titles in most English Bibles are “Gospel According to...” – fitting since the “good news” of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is the greatest news ever reported.
- B. Why were they written?
 1. The Rapid Spread of Christianity – When persecution and missionary zeal caused Christianity to spread, there was a need for an accurate accounting of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Many legends of His life, especially fantastic tales of miracles in His childhood, warped the purpose and meaning of His coming, so an accurate, eye-witness account was necessary. A telling focused on the purpose and meaning of His life, ministry, and death. The Gospels “provide authoritative answers to questions about Jesus’ life and ministry, and they strengthen believers’ assurance regarding the reality of their faith (Luke 1:4)” – MacArthur Study Bible
 2. The Death of Many Witnesses – As the years went by many of the witnesses to the events began to die. There was a need for written accounts of their testimony of what they had “heard, seen with their eyes, looked at and touched with their hands.” (1 John 1:1)
- B. The Four Accounts
 1. The authors – There were other accounts written, some are included in apocryphal literature and accepted by some organizations. The evidence is clear, however, that only these four were accepted by the early church. The early church accepted only the four written by an Apostle or one closely associated to and under the authority of an Apostle. Later church councils confirmed this decision.

2. The Author – The Holy Spirit superintended (directed, but did not dictate to) the human authors so that, using their own personalities and styles, they composed and recorded without error in the original manuscripts God's revelation to mankind.
 - a. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pet 1:20-21)
 - b. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (1 Tim 3:16-17)
 - c. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)
 3. Similar Accounts – Each Gospel writer had distinct purposes and audiences in writing. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke all view the life of Jesus in a common way in contrast to John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. (From the Greek SYNOPTIKOS; syn means together or same; optic means seeing; thus to see together or having a common view).
 4. Matthew – To the Jews presenting Jesus as the long awaited, prophesied Messiah.
 5. Mark – To the Romans presenting Jesus as the Powerful Servant.
 6. Luke – To the Greeks presenting Jesus as the perfect God-Man.
 7. John – To everybody presenting Jesus as the divine Son of God.
 8. Comparison of the four Gospels
- C. “Synoptic Problem” – Literary Dependence?
1. How were the synoptic Gospels written with so much agreement in material, order, and wording, and yet with such differences that each writer remains an author and not a mere copyist of the Gospel tradition as recorded by others?
 2. In order to explain the similarities and differences while denying the supernatural work of God and church tradition, liberal scholars have developed a scheme of literary dependence between the synoptics.
 3. Differences – Each author wrote independently using their own personalities and styles and with a particular purpose and audience. Each author was directed by the Holy Spirit to present their account from a particular viewpoint.
 4. Similarities – Each author was either an eyewitness to the events or was directly connected with an eyewitness (1 Pet 5:13; Mark 14:51-52; Acts 12:12; Col. 4:10, 24; Phil 24); extensive oral tradition existed (John 21:25; Acts 20:35), and each author was guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21; John 14:26).

Introduction to Mark

A. Author

1. The second Gospel is technically anonymous since the author does not name himself in the book.
2. The title “according to Mark” (Kata Markon) was added later by a scribe, but is significant in that it shows the view of the early church.
3. Early church tradition:

- a. Papias (c. AD 60 – 130), a disciple of the apostle John: “The elder said this also: **Mark, who became Peter’s interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord.** For he had neither heard of the Lord nor been one of his followers, but afterwards, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs of his hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord’s sayings. So Mark made no mistake in thus recording some things just as he remembered them. For he was careful of this one thing, to omit none of the things he had heard and to make no untrue statements therein.” (Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.15)
 - b. Irenaeus (ca. AD 115-200): “Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written Gospel also in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church. But after their death, **Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter,** and Luke also, who was a follower of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel which was preached by him. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the Gospel, while he was living in Ephesus in Asia.” (Against Heresies, 3.1.1-4)
 - c. Origen (ca. AD 185-254) as quoted by Eusebius (ca.. AD 265-339): “Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism. (Ecclesiastical History, 6:25)
 - d. Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150-215) as quoted by Eusebius: “Peter having publicly preached the word at Rome, and spoken forth the Gospel by the Spirit, many of those present exhorted **Mark, as having long been a follower of his, and remembering what he had said, to write what had been spoken; and that having prepared the Gospel,** he delivered it to those who had asked him for it; which when Peter came to the knowledge of, he neither decidedly forbade nor encouraged him.” (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14)
4. Internal evidence is mostly circumstantial, i.e.
 - a. The author was familiar with the geography of Palestine / Jerusalem.
 - b. The author knew Aramaic and used Latin expressions as well.
 - c. The author understood Jewish customs.
 - d. The Gospel has a special tie to Peter as Mark did – special emphasis given to Peter (16:7) and the similarity between Mark and Peter’s sermon in Acts 10:34-43.
 5. John Mark:
 - a. Jewish name – John; Roman name – Mark
 - b. Son of Mary who owned the home where some believers met to pray for Peter’s release from prison. [¹²And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. Acts 12:12] Mary’s home is traditionally where the Last Super was held (Mark 14:15). Here home is also the probable place where the disciples met after the resurrection (John 20:19) and before Pentecost (Acts 1:13).
 - c. Cousin of Barnabas. [¹⁰Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas’ cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); Col. 4:10]

- d. Perhaps the spiritual son of Peter. [¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark. 1 Pet. 5:13]
 - e. Accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey as their helper. [²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark. Acts 12:25 and ⁵When they reached Salamis, they *began* to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. Acts 13:5]
 - f. Abandoned Barnabas and Paul. [¹³Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem. Acts 13:13]
 - g. Commitment of Barnabas to his discipleship led to a separation between Barnabas and Paul. [³⁷Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. Acts 15:37-39]
 - h. Late in Paul's life he was ministering to/with Paul in Rome and Paul considered him "useful for service". [²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴*as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. Philem. 1:23-24 and ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. 2 Tim. 4:11]
- B. Date of writing
1. Early church writings place Matthew as the first Gospel written – perhaps as early as AD 50.
 2. Acts was most likely written between AD 61-63 being written soon after the closing of Acts with Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. Luke was written before Acts ~ AD 60.
 3. Mark was written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 since no mention is made in the Gospel.
 4. Early church writings differ as to when Mark was written – before or after Peter's death in AD 64-68.
 5. Mark was written between AD 50-70, most likely around the time of Peter's death ~ early AD 60s. Possibly written in draft form before Peter's death, then widely distributed to the Roman church after his martyrdom in AD 64-68.
- C. Audience (from Gordon Kemble's New Testament Survey Class Notes)
1. The Romans were the rulers of the known world, men of few words and much action. They have no knowledge of the Old Testament or Jewish culture, therefore no interest in prophecies fulfilled or Messiahs given. They would, however, be interested in a leader claiming special authority and seeming to have supernatural power. Mark writes of a man who does not just speak, but Jesus, the servant of an all-powerful God, who acts. No genealogies (who cares), no prophesy (who believes), few words (who would listen). Just a man of power, actions, and miracles, a man the Romans could admire and understand.
- D. Theme
1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1), the Suffering Servant (10:45)
 - a. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1:1
 - b. **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

E. Purpose

1. Rome's Christians were terribly persecuted under Nero. According to the early-second-century historian Tacitus, Nero burned Christians alive as torches to light his gardens at night. He killed other Christians in equally severe ways (e.g., feeding them to wild animals for public entertainment).
2. Mark's Gospel would strengthen Roman believers in the midst of this persecution by showing how Jesus persevered in the face of opposition and continued in the will of the Father on the road to the cross.
3. Also, Mark's Gospel encourages believers as they see the suffering servant triumph over death.

F. General Outline of Mark

- I. Introduction (1:1-13)
- II. Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23)
- III. Withdrawal with Disciples into Various Gentile Regions (7:24-8:26)
- IV. The Road to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52)
- V. The Passion Week (11:1-15:47)
- VI. The Resurrection (16:1-20)