

An overview of Mark's gospel

West End Gospel Hall July 30, 2013 by Robert Wilson

Mark's gospel in miniature

Christ Jesus: “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Philippians 2:5-11

The Background to Mark's gospel

The gospel of Mark is one of the most precious books ever written. It seeks to give us a vivid and realistic picture of what Jesus was really like. It does not, however, by any means give us a full or complete account of the life, the teachings, or the personality of the Lord Jesus. John 21:25, tells us that it would be impossible to do that. Mark's purpose was to strengthen the faith and courage of the Christians who were facing persecution and martyrdom.

History tells us that the gospel of Mark is the result of the labours of Peter and Mark. One of the early church writers, quoting the apostle John says that Mark was Peter's interpreter. The early leaders of the church (Papias, Eusebius, Ireneaus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexander, Origen, Jerome) write that Mark made accurate notes from the sermons of Peter and from his conversations with Peter. At the urging of other believers he wrote out the notes of these eyewitness accounts of the Saviour for the guidance and support of Christians. These notes were very quickly copied and spread among the believers.

Because of the close work between Mark and Peter, we can think of Mark's gospel as Peter's memories of Christ, and we can think of Peter's epistles as Peter's meditations on the Christian pathway.

There are no accurate dates as to when the gospels were written. If it is assumed that Matthew and Luke had access to Mark's gospel when writing their own accounts, then these dates can be suggested: Mark, in 57-60 AD; Matthew and Luke, in 61 AD; (They may have been written about the same time.) And John, in 90 AD. Mark's gospel was probably written in Rome.

As we think of this gospel being the result of the labours of Peter and Mark it suggests to us that the first portrait of Christ was prepared by two servants whose hearts were broken by failure. The Spirit of God brought them together to reveal the heart of the perfect servant. This gospel shows us the heart and the feelings and the compassion of Christ.

WRITER OF THE GOSPEL

Who was Mark? What do the scriptures say about Mark?

John Mark was a man whose life was marked by failure, recovery and consecration. It is interesting to follow the highlights of Mark's spiritual progress in the word of God.

SALVATION 1Peter 5:15 - That day in Jerusalem, under the preaching of Peter, when Christ became real to him.

INSTRUCTION Acts 12:12 - Mark was brought up in the very centre of the Christian fellowship. The believers met in his mother's home.

EARLY TRAINING Acts 12:25 - he accompanied Barnabas and Saul to Antioch, where he would have heard the ministry of the prophets and teachers gathered there.

A STEP BACKWARD Acts 13:5, 13 - when Barnabas and Saul are led of the Holy Spirit to go out with the Gospel, he accompanied them as their willing (voluntary) servant (minister). For some unexplained reason, he left Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem.

Perhaps Mark was put into a place of responsibility too soon after salvation and he was not yet ready for the responsibilities.

RESTORATION Acts 15:30-35 - suggests that he returned to Antioch with these brethren and once again was refreshed and restored under the ministry of the word of God.

DISAGREEMENT Acts 15:36-41 - although he was without a doubt restored unto the Lord, yet he had not gained the confidence of all the brethren. Paul rejected the idea of Mark accompanying them. Perhaps Paul did not think that Mark was

ready for the mission field. He needed more time to get established spiritually.

APPROVED OF GOD Our last glimpse of Mark is the Spirit of God's commendation of his service.

Col.4:10 Mark receives a special commendation by Paul to the believers.

Philemon 24 he sends greetings to Philemon and his family.

1Peter 5:14 he is labouring with Peter at Rome and sends greetings to the Asian believers.

2Tim.4:11 he is a valuable minister of the gospel.

Studying Mark's gospel

When we study the gospel of Mark there are different ways open to us. We can study the gospel of Mark;

- _ historically – seeing Mark's gospel as a historical document, which it is.
- _ geographically – taking special note of what Mark tells us about the people, the places, and the customs of that day.
- _ linguistically – looking at the meaning of the words used by Mark to describe Christ
- _ thematically – looking at the topics and the subjects that appear in Mark's gospel
- _ biographically – examining the life of the Lord Jesus as He moved through Galilee and Judaea

A THEMATIC OUTLINE OF MARK'S GOSPEL

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| 1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God | Mark 1:1- 13 |
| 2. Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah | Mark 1:14- 45 |
| 3. Jesus Christ, the Son of man | Mark 2:1- 13 |
| 4. Reaching out to those in need | Mark 2:14- 28 |
| 5. Call to discipleship | Mark 3 |
| 6. Teaching by parables | Mark 4 |
| 7. Deliverance from bondage | Mark 5 |
| 8. Proclaiming the gospel | Mark 6 |
| 9. True defilement | Mark 7 |
| 10. Demands of discipleship | Mark 8 |
| 11. A vision of glory (the transfiguration) | Mark 9 |
| 12. Citizens of the kingdom | Mark 10 |
| 13. Entrance of the Messiah | Mark 11 |

14. Parables of the kingdom	Mark 12
15. Conflict for the kingdom	Mark 13
16. The journey to Gethsemane	Mark 14
17. The crucifixion	Mark 15
18. The resurrection	Mark 16

The major themes of Mark's gospel

The gospel of Mark seeks to answer the question, "What was Jesus like?". To answer that question three major themes run through the gospel of Mark. As we study this gospel we will notice the deity of Christ, the servant character of Christ and the perfect humanity of Christ. We will notice these themes in the actions and the words of the Lord, and in what the people said about Him. We will need to be careful when studying this gospel that we do not focus upon one theme and miss out on the teachings about the other themes.

Jesus of Nazareth: the Son of God

The Word of God tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He was this before the world was created. He was still the Son of God while He walked upon this earth. And He will be the Son of God after this world ceases to be. So as you study this gospel, you will be made aware of His humanity and of His servant character, but you should never forget that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

There are seven positive assertions throughout the gospel of Mark to remind the reader of the deity of Christ.

- Mark 1:1; "Jesus Christ, the Son of God."
- Mark 1:11; "Thou art my beloved Son."
- Mark 1:24; "Thou art, the Holy One of God."
- Mark 3:11; "Thou art the Son of God."
- Mark 5:7; "Jesus, thou Son of the most high God."
- Mark 9:7; "This is my beloved Son."
- Mark 15:39; "Truly this man was the Son of God."

In Mark's gospel the Lord Jesus tells His disciples on a number of occasions of His forthcoming death and resurrection.

- Mark 8:31, His rejection by the people;
- Mark 9:9, the disciples were not to speak of having seen

His glory and majesty on the holy mount;
Mark 9:31, His betrayal into the hands of His enemies;
Mark 10:34, His scourging and mocking by the Gentiles.
Mark 12:6-8, the well beloved Son is killed and cast out
Mark 12:10, the stone rejected, but then exalted
Mark 14:8, she has come beforehand to anoint My body
to the burying
Mark 14:22-23, the feast of remembrance spoke
of His death for His own
Mark 14:27-28 the shepherd smitten (killed) and the
sheep scattered
Mark 14:62, the Son of man exalted yet coming again

Jesus of Nazareth: the messenger of Jehovah

When the Lord came into the world He came with a definite purpose. He came to save His people by redeeming them with His own blood. But He also came to manifest the Word of God. And this He did on every opportunity that He was given. He would take the time to teach the Word of God using illustrations from the world around. The first record for us of Jesus teaching is in Luke 2:46, 47. "They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." As He taught the people the Lord was fulfilling the instructions of Deuteronomy 6:15-17. He was diligent as He spoke and showed the things of God.

Mark 1, repeats these words. "Jesus came." In Mark's gospel we will see that this is a mark of Christ. He is going to the place where the people lived. In Matthew's gospel wise men were coming to Christ to worship Him. In Luke's gospel we see the people drawing near to hear Him. And in John's gospel we see Jesus teaching those who have come to where He is. (see Deut.16:2)

Mark's gospel gives us many examples of the Lord teaching His disciples and the people.

Mk.1:21 He taught in the synagogue.
Mk.1:22 He taught with authority.
He knew what He was talking about
Mk.2:13 He taught by the sea side to the multitudes.
Mk.4:1 He explained the word of God.

Mk.4:2	He used parables to illustrate spiritual truths.
Mk.6:2	The people marvelled at His wise applications of the Word of God.
Mk.6:6	He taught the things of God in the villages.
Mk.6:34	He taught many truths.
Mk.8:31	He taught about His coming sacrifice.
Mk.9:31	He taught them about His death.
Mk.10:1	He made teaching His practice.
Mk.11:17	He challenged His hearers with God's Word.
Mk.12:35	He questioned the people's understanding of the Word of God
Mk.13	He taught His disciples about the future.
Mk.14:49	It was His daily practice to teach in the temple

Jesus of Nazareth: the Son of man

To answer the question, "*What was Jesus like?*"; Mark gives us a third portrait of Christ. He pictured Him as the Son of Man. What was the significance of this title? I believe that it takes us back to God's promise in the garden of Eden. "And I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15) Christ is now presented as that seed. Christ identifies Himself with mankind as a real, genuine and true man, yet He was sinless in all His ways. He is the Son of Man. He is that one who would come to deliver from the bondage of sin and Satan.

Of the many reference made in Mark's gospel, to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, each has a special emphasis.

HIS AUTHORITY; Mark 2:10

"the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"

HIS SUPREMACY; Mark 2:28

"the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath"

HIS REJECTION; Mark 8:31 *"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."*

HIS EXALTATION; Mark 8:38 *"the Son of man ... cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

HIS RESURRECTION; Mark 9:9

"till the Son of man were risen from the dead."

HIS FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE; Mark 9:12

"it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things,

and be set at nought”

HIS BETRAYAL; Mark 9:31

“For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.”

HIS REPROACH; Mark 10:33

“Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:”

HIS PURPOSE; Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

HIS GLORY; Mark 13:26

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”

HIS PRESENCE IN THE FATHER’S HOUSE; Mark 13:34

“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.”

HIS SORROW; Mark 14:21

“The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.”

HIS CONSIDERATION; Mark 14:41

“And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”

HIS JUDGMENT; Mark 14:62

“And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

The Spirit of God inspired Mark to remind us of Jesus’ perfect humanity. His words and His deeds affected the minds of all whom He touched in some way. They voiced their astonishment and wonder and fear. This gospel shows us the humbleness of His life (6:3), the guidance of the Spirit in His life (1:12), the emotions He displayed. He sighed deeply in His spirit (7:34, 8:12). He was moved with compassion (6:34). He marvelled at their unbelief (6:6). He was moved with anger (3:5, 8:33, 10:14). He was hungry (11:12). He was tired (6:31). He was tender in His touch (10:21, 9:36). Why does the gospel show all of these features of Christ? Because Mark was telling us what Jesus was

really like.

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord kept the purpose of his coming into this world always before him. Even as a young boy, in Luke 2, he said to Mary and Joseph, "I must be about my Father's business." And his Father's business involved a two-fold task. First he came to manifest the word of God. (John 17:6, 8) And then he came to offer himself that he might save his people from their sins. (Mat.1:21)

One feature of this gospel is its closeness to chronological order. Beginning with Mark 11, this gospel tells us of the events in the life of the Lord Jesus over the next eight days. For the first four days Jesus would leave Bethany and travel to Jerusalem and then return for the night. This is a distance of about three kilometres. The route to Jerusalem would have taken them over the mount of Olivet. So for each of those first four days the Lord would pass by the garden of Gethsemane twice. And on the fifth day He would experience such agony as He prayed to the Father in that garden.

Day 1: Mark 11:1 - 10 The king cometh

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem
Jesus surveys the temple
Jesus returned to Bethany for the night

Day 2: Mark 11:12 - 19 The searching eye of Christ

Jesus condemns the fig tree
Jesus cleanses the temple
Jesus condemns them for turning God's house of prayer into a market place (den of thieves)
Jesus returns to Bethany for the night

Day 3: Mark 11:20 - Mark 13:37 The final teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ

The fig tree has dried up
Jesus' authority is questioned
The parable of the vineyard
The question of tribute money
The question of the resurrection
The question of the commandments
The question of the sonship of the Messiah

The question of a true offering
The question of the tribulation
The parable of the fig tree
Jesus returns to Bethany for the night

Day 4: Mark 14:1-9 Anointed and betrayed

The Lord may not have gone to Jerusalem on this day.
The plot to take Jesus
Jesus is anointed at Bethany

Day 5: Mark 14:10-72 The sufferings of Christ

The betrayal Mark 14:10, 11
The passover meal Mark 14:12-31
The agony of Gethsemane Mark 14:32-42
Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane Mark 14:43-52
Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin Mark 14:53-72

Day 6: Mark 15:1-47 The sacrifice of Christ

Jesus in the judgment hall of Pilate Mark 15:1-23
Jesus' crucifixion Mark 15:24-41
Jesus' burial Mark 15:42-47

Day 7: Mark 15:46 - Mark 16:1a The Sabbath Day

Jesus lay in the tomb

Day 8: Mark 16:1-8 At the sepulchre

The resurrection