

Gospels: MARK

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark is probably the simplest/easiest to understand of the gospels, but it's still just as profound in how it displays and glorifies Christ as Lord. Mark is descriptive in its storytelling, yet Mark's gospel account is broken up into a bunch of short-form, fast-paced stories that all come together to form one cohesive narrative. All of Mark's stories highlight the authority that Christ has, and the power that he wields, while demonstrating Christ as a servant to all as he suffered for us all.

Jesus's authority is demonstrated in Mark through the miracles he performed. We see Jesus heal the sick, cast out demons, feed the five thousand (and then the four thousand), and calm a storm while at sea. But Jesus's greatest miracle was that he was put to death, he was buried, and then we see him rise from the grave – defeating Satan, sin, and death – so that we can find salvation through Him.

IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

From when Jesus gathered the first of his disciples to when he sacrificed himself on the cross, Christ, throughout the Gospel of Mark, is depicted as a suffering servant for the sake of all who would and will believe. Every miracle Jesus performs is an example of how we should live our lives: by serving the people around us.

Now as Christ lived and died as a service to us, we can live and die as a service to others, all for the glory of God.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

Chapter 1: Presentation

Chapters 2-7: Opposition & Hardness of Heart

Chapters 8-10: Instruction & Predictions

Chapters 11-15: Rejection

Chapter 16: Resurrection

JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The Gospel of Mark is one of four biblical accounts about the life of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:1 states that this book is “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ” –the gospel meaning the good news – and *what is that good news?* It's that Jesus Christ came down to this earth, being fully God and fully man, and then died for the sake of all who would believe. And now, 2000 years later, we get to read all about the life of Jesus so that we can see, know, and understand how we might be saved through him.

Throughout this gospel, we can learn how Jesus dedicated his life to ministry; and through his life, we too can learn how to dedicate our lives to ministry, whether it's in the workplace or serving at a local church or elsewhere. Christ was a servant to all so that we can be a servant to others for the sake of his name, giving all glory and praise to him. Christ set an example for us by walking in step with the Father and the Spirit, and now we, too, can use his example to do the same. Christ performed miracles such that we can know the power and authority he has on earth and in heaven. The Gospel of Mark contains all of this so we can live our lives through him who saved us.

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Observation

- **Author:** Early church fathers affirm Peter passed on stories and reports to his attendant/writer, John Mark. While John Mark was not an eyewitness of the resurrection of Jesus (nor was he a disciple), there is evidence that he had been around Jesus. The young man in Mark 14:52 is thought to be Mark, and because of its Petrine origin, it gains its credibility.
- **Date and Location:** External and internal data points to Rome as the place of composition. It was either written in the mid-to-late 50s A.D. or the mid-to-late 60s A.D.
- **Purpose:** Gentile Christians are frequently mentioned as the recipients of this gospel, as Mark seems to be writing to an audience who are largely unfamiliar with Jewish customs. Many believe that Mark was righting with a Roman audience in mind. Mark aims to make Jewish customs more accessible to its readers so that they can better understand that Jesus is the end result of God's work for the nation of Israel and the rest of the world.
- **Literary Features:** Of the four Gospels, Mark is most "docudrama" of them all, containing little snippets of Jesus' ministry when he roamed the earth. Here are some literary features to look out for:
 - o **Storytelling:** Mark is a collection of stories: ranging from stories of Jesus calling those to follow him (Mark 1:16-20), to stories of Jesus performing miracles (Mark 1:40-42), and to stories of resurrection (Mark 5:35-43 and Mark 16).
 - o **Jesus' Humanity:** Mark writes about the humanity of Jesus. He has compassion for the leper (Mark 1:41), he was grieved at people's hardness of heart (Mark 3:5), and he sighs in his Spirit about the attitude of the Pharisees (Mark 8:12). Even though he is fully God, Jesus still had human expressions.

Interpretation

- Remember that Mark, like the other gospels, is primarily narrative literature in its genre.
- Knowing that one of the themes of Mark is discipleship, we should approach life with Christ-centered discipleship. How does that affect your view of Jesus' service to others as well as his general approach to life throughout the book?

Application

- How should we approach discipleship considering the Gospel of Mark?
- How should we approach Jesus considering his approach to discipleship?
- How does reading about Christ's love for others affect your view of Christ's love towards you?
- The power of Christ is displayed throughout the entire book. How does reading about his power, knowing that it can now be demonstrated in you through the Spirit, affect your view of God?

Prayer

- Ask the Lord who you should be discipling and/or if you need to be disciplined by someone. Ask him who that person (or people) should be!
- In Mark 5, Jesus raises Jairus's daughter from the dead because of his faith. Ask the Lord to help you have faith like Jairus did, even when it seems like you're up against insurmountable odds!
- Ask the Lord to help you grow as a servant towards others, as Christ was a servant to us all.

CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT DOES HISTORY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF MARK

"Wherefore also Mark, the interpreter and follower of Peter, does thus commence his Gospel narrative: *'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, which shall prepare Your way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make the paths straight before our God.'* Plainly does the commencement of the Gospel quote the words of the holy prophets, and point out Him at once, whom they confessed as God and Lord; Him, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who had also made promise to Him, that He would send His messenger before His face, who was John, crying in the wilderness, in the spirit and power of Elias, ... Mark 16:19 confirming what had been spoken by the prophet: *'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand, until I make Your foes Your footstool.'* Thus God and the Father are truly one and the same; He who was announced by the prophets and handed down by the true Gospel; whom we Christians worship and love with the whole heart, as the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things therein." - **Irenaeus**

"It is evident that he [Mark] was a charismatically endowed teacher and evangelist ... A careful reading of the Gospel will serve to introduce the author as a theologian of the first rank who never forgot that his primary intention was the strengthening of the people of God in a time of fiery ordeal." - **William A. Lane**

