



The Gospel of Mark
Introduction
(Mark 1:1)

I. Where We Have Been/Where We are Going

- Colossians: The Center Holds (Justification)
- Daniel: How do We Sing in a Foreign Land? (Assurance)
- Mark: On the Journey of Discipleship (Sanctification)

Colossians

- **Subtitle:** “The Center Holds”
- **The Question:** What is the nature of the universe?
- **Main idea:** (In contrast to the philosophy of “post-structuralism”) Jesus is the Center that provides a cohesive structure and meaning to the universe
- **Action:** Avoid fad religions and place your trust in Christ instead (Justification)

Daniel

- **Subtitle:** “How do we sing in a foreign land?”
- **The Question:** How do we live out our faith in a hostile environment?
- **Main idea:** God is sovereign—He is in control even when our circumstances look dismal
- **Action:** Having assurance that God is sovereign, live out your faith with humility and quiet confidence (Assurance)

Mark: Preliminary Details

- **Subtitle:** “On the Journey of Discipleship”
- **The Question:** What can we learn from Jesus as we travel with him through Mark’s gospel?
- **Main idea:** Traveling closely with Jesus deepens our understanding of Him and challenges us to improve our Christian walk
- **Action:** Being honest with ourselves and being open to the nudgings of the Holy Spirit, we continue to work on our thoughts and actions to become more like Christ (Sanctification)

Not a “Biography” but an Invitation

- “This reading of Mark’s gospel . . . presupposes the modern sense of the gospels as narratives designed to promote faith in Jesus and involvement in his mission rather than as conveyors of information about his historical life”

--Brendan Byrne: *A Costly Freedom*, xix

On the Journey of Discipleship

- The Gospel of Mark presents to us an opportunity to take a long journey with Jesus, so we can complete the short journey from our head (where we *know* who Jesus is) to our hearts (where we *experience* Jesus as Savior and Lord of our lives).

Prepare to Plod:

- “the man who moves along step by step is the one who moves along the best, not like some who fall head over heels when they wish to make a great leap ahead”

--from *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor (1120s A.D.)*, p. 137

Learn It All

- “Learn everything; you will see afterwards that nothing is superfluous”
--Hugh of St. Victor, p. 137
- “It is never only just about what you think it’s about”
--Me

The Goal: Holiness

- “Holiness is the goal of the growth of the church as the body of Christ (Eph. 4:15) . . . No-one laboured more intensely than Paul to evangelize and plant churches, yet his descriptions of church growth focus, not on the numerical growth, but on growth in holiness, looking toward the day of the Lord” (pp. 64-65)

--Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church: Contours of Christian Theology*

II. Background Information: Preliminary Details

- Author: John Mark, missionary companion to Paul and Barnabas and assistant/secretary to Peter.
- Content: thought to be Peter's teachings and stories regarding Jesus, recorded and arranged by John Mark
- Date written: possibly 65 A.D.—shortly after the burning of Rome . . . Or possibly after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. . . Or possibly earlier still, 45-60 A.D. to adequately precede Luke's gospel
- Where written: probably in Rome
- Audience: likely the Christians suffering persecution in Rome

The Mark-Paul Connection: Paul and Barnabas Separate because of Mark Acts 15: 36-41

- ³⁶ And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” ³⁷ Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Mark is reconciled with Paul

II Timothy 4:11

- ¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.
- Mark as a “Judah figure” (brother to Joseph)
- Sermon: “Half Successes and Partial Failures”

The Mark-Paul Connection

- “¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and **Mark the cousin of Barnabas** (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)” (Colossians 4:10)
- “²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do **Mark**, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philemon 1:23-24)

The Mark-Peter Connection

- Mark as assistant/secretary to Peter, who provides “authoritative apostolic witness” of the teachings and works of Jesus
- “The historian Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, cites an earlier tradition, that of the second-century bishop Papias, who records that the ‘Elder’ (John) was wont to speak of Mark as the ‘interpreter of Peter.’ This ‘Petrine’ understanding of the gospel’s origin became traditional in the church.” (Brendan Byrne: *A Costly Freedom*, xvii)
- “¹³ She who is at Babylon [Rome], who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.” (I Peter 5:13)

The construction of the “synoptic” gospels

Mark: written first

Matthew:

Mark’s materials “Q”-source

Materials unique to Matthew

Luke

Mark’s materials “Q”-source

Materials unique to Luke
(especially parables)

Characteristics of Mark's Account

- The shortest gospel: 16 chapters
- No details about the birth of Jesus
- Takes us closest to the voice and actions of Jesus
- A fast-paced summary of the ministry of Jesus
- “*euthus*” (Greek): “immediately” (used 42 times)

What to expect in Mark

- Jesus battles demons and malign forces
- Jesus faces hostility, misunderstanding, and betrayal
- An “open-ended” conclusion: not tied up neatly
- An antidote for modern “darkness of unbelief and despair”

III. Mark's Introduction

Mark 1:1

- “The beginning of the *gospel* of Jesus *Christ*, the *Son of God*” (1:1)
- “Gospel”
- “Christ”/ “Messiah”
- “Son of God”

“Gospel” Defined: The Jewish Tradition

- “Gospel” means “Good news” . . . But of what?
- Isaiah (61:1-2): a future liberation from captivity by means of a high priestly figure who will “inaugurate a Jubilee year of release, make atonement for sin, and liberate the faithful” (Brendan Byrne, 5)
- But “captive” to what? To sin and being trapped in a demonic world
- Atonement for sin assumed to be via the usual animal sacrifice, thus the need for a “priestly figure” in the tradition of Melchizedek
- ***Summation: “The good news of the displacement of demonic rule by that of God”*** (Byrne, 5) [The “Messiah” is merely the vehicle through whom God’s deliverance is enacted]

The coming Messiah brings “good news”

Isaiah 61:1-2

- **61** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;^[a]
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^[b]
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
- Read by Jesus in the temple at the beginning of his ministry in
reference to himself (Luke 4:17-21)

“Gospel” Defined: The Greco-Roman Tradition

- To announce the “good news” of the birth or elevation of a new emperor
- To present the “good news” in a proclamation from the emperor
- The main character is essential for the event to occur, rather than merely being the vehicle through whom a divine action is delivered as in the Jewish tradition

“Gospel” Defined: The Christian Tradition

- “Couched within the Isaianic framework, the ‘good news’ is that the liberating rule of God is close at hand. In early Christian usage, however, the ‘gospel’ proclaimed *by* Jesus rapidly became the ‘gospel *about* Jesus’—because of the absolute centrality of his person and destiny in the implementation of the rule of God. Thus, more normally for Paul [as in Romans 1:3-4], the content of ‘the gospel’ is focused on the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus” (Byrne, 7)
- Jesus as the *key instrument* for bringing about the downfall of the old era and its captivity to evil powers.

“Christ”/ “Messiah” Defined

- Means “**anointed**” (when a person was installed into a position, such as king or priest, they were often anointed with oil)
- “The Lord’s anointed” = title of respect for the king
- After the return from Babylon, many Jews hoped for a “son of David” who would free Israel from foreign oppression, and rule in righteousness, prosperity, and peace (Jeremiah 33:14-26).
- However, this Messiah was thought of as being strictly human

“Son of God” Defined

- People: Israel as a nation referred to as God’s “son” or “child” (Exodus 4:22-23); thus, all Israelites are “children of God” (Deuteronomy 14:1)
- “Imago Dei” = “In the image of God” (Genesis 1:26)
- “human” (in contrast to living as a “beast” as in Daniel chapter 4, 7)
- Qualifiers added to highlight Jesus’ unique relationship to God the Father in the New Testament, such as *only begotten* son of God or the *beloved Son of God*

Next Week: John the Baptist

Mark 1:2-8

- Gideon presentation as well (donations accepted 😊)

Let Us Pray

