

The Gospel of Mark

1:1 “THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS THE CHRIST. . .THE SON OF GOD”		
2 CLIMACTIC CONFESSIONS:		
	8:29 Apostle Peter	15:39 Roman Centurion
CHAPTERS 1—8	CHAPTERS 8—10	CHAPTERS 11—16
Sent to the Multitudes	Servant to the Disciples	Sacrifice for the World
Deity	Discipleship	Death
Christ’s Power	Christ’s Principles	Christ’s Passion
Key verse of Mark: Mark 10:45 “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve . . .		and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Purpose Statement for the Gospel of Mark:

Mark recorded in rapid succession specific events from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ to present the gospel to a Roman audience, proving that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and to provide a pattern of discipleship through the model of the suffering servant climaxing in His passion.

An Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

I. The Author

- A. The inscription *Kata Markon* (according to Mark) at the beginning of the earliest manuscripts reveals the view of the early church. The early church never ascribed authorship of the second Gospel to anyone other than Mark.
- B. The external evidence for a Markan authorship is both early and strong. The Church Fathers such as Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, the Muratorian Fragment, Tatian's Diatessaron, Clement of Alexander, Tertullian, and Origen, Eusebius all affirm Mark as the author.
- C. Although the author is not named in the book (technically the Gospel is anonymous), there are indications (internal evidence) that support Markan authorship.
 1. Mark is the only Gospel that records the incident of the young man who fled from Gethsemane (14:51-52). The early church believed this was Mark.
 2. The detailed description of the "guest room" in Mark 14:12-16 (cf. Mt. 26:17-19; Jn. 13:1-12) would be more natural had it been his house.
 3. There is evidence within the book of a knowledge of Aramaic and the local customs that would fit Mark, who was a Palestinian Jew (Acts 12:17).
 4. A close connection between Mark and Peter (I Pet. 5:13) is noticed when comparison is made of the content of the Gospel and the sermon of Peter in Acts 10:36-41. Also Eusebius, quoting Papias, says Mark was the "interpreter" for Peter's teaching. Peter is the apostle associated with the second Gospel.
- D. Mark's name appears eight times in the New Testament (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; Philemon 23, 24; I Pet. 5:13). John was his Jewish name and Mark was his

Roman name. Mark was the son of a Jerusalem widow whose large home was a meeting place for the believers during the early days of the church. Mark and his cousin Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 12:25), but Mark turned back before the mission ended (Acts 13:13). This later brought division between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). However, Paul eventually was reconciled to Mark and commended him (II Tim. 4:11).

- E. Conclusion: Both external and internal evidence support the early church consensus that John Mark penned the second Gospel in the New Testament.
- II. Date of Writing
- A. Since the date of composition is connected to the synoptic problem (the relationship of Matthew, Mark, and Luke), some who argue for the priority of Mark date it as early as c. A.D. 45.
 - B. Others, who see Matthew as the first Gospel (Matthean priority), would date it near the martyrdom of Peter but before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) around A.D. 67–68.
 - C. Early church traditions ascribed the date to periods both before and after Peter’s death; therefore, certainty is not possible.
 - D. Since Peter apparently came to Rome c. A.D. 63, any date before A.D. 63 is problematic and goes against an almost uniform tradition of Rome as the audience for the Gospel.
 - E. A date later than A.D. 70 is untenable for those who believe in predictive prophecy since the fall of Jerusalem is prophesied in 13:2.
 - F. Therefore, a date of c. A.D. 65–67 is most likely based upon the evidence.
- III. Historical Background
- A. The origination of the book is viewed by most as Rome. Mark’s presence with Peter in Rome is confirmed in I Peter 5:13, if “Babylon” as a code name refers to Rome. According to the

testimony of Clement of Alexandria, the Gospel was written in Rome at the request of the Roman Christians and delivered to them upon its completion.

- B. The destination of the book then was the church at Rome. The earliest testimony in support of a Roman readership is found in the Anti-Marconite Prologue, which is attached to the Gospel accounts in many Old Latin manuscripts (c. A.D. 160-180). The internal evidence also favors this position. Remarkably only one Old Testament quotation is given (contra Matthew), Aramaic expressions are usually interpreted, Jewish customs are often explained, no preaching prohibitions are listed, and the gospel is said to be preached to all nations (13:20) and the temple was a house of prayer for all nations (11:17). Further, the internal references to Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus (15:21; cf. Rom. 16:13), certain Latin technical terms, and certain Greek constructions all point to a Roman readership.
- C. The life situation of the Romans at the time Mark was written (c. A.D. 65-67) was a time of crisis not unlike that in the book itself. Rome was the domination power and true believers were suffering at the hands of the emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68). Following a fire that swept the city in A.D. 64, the Christians were blamed and local persecution broke out with many being imprisoned and martyred.
- D. The evidence for the connection between Mark and Peter is both external and internal. Eusebius quotes Papias as saying that Mark wrote down what Peter had remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. The style of the book compares closely with the sermon of Peter as recorded in Acts 10:36-41. Details favorable to Peter often are omitted from this Gospel while unfavorable events are included!

IV. Reason for Writing

As revealed by the opening statement (1:1) and the two climactic confessions in the book (8:29; 15:39), the book of Mark was written to demonstrate that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of God.” Mark does not present a comprehensive life of Christ. His Gospel is both evangelistic and edifying in its presentation of Christ as the suffering Servant (cf. Isa.

53) who not only must die but who is also the Savior of mankind (10:45). As the Savior, He is the Son of God for all, especially the Roman world. As the Servant, He is the model and inspiration for discipleship.

V. Characteristics

- A. Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels.
- B. Great prominence is given to presenting the account as the “gospel” (1:1). The word stands in the caption for the whole book.
- C. Mark writes in close association with Peter; therefore, Peter’s perspective is often highlighted.
- D. Mark stresses the element of secrecy imposed by Jesus in connection with many of his miracles (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), exorcisms (1:25, 34; 3:12), confession of Messiahship (8:30), and disclosure of the transfiguration (9:9).
- E. Mark repeatedly notes the presence of the masses around Jesus, especially in chapters 1–7.
- F. Unique linguistic features such as Latinisms, rough Greek syntax, abundant use of the historical present mixed with past tenses, parentheses, and colloquialisms are all used.
- G. Mark is the gospel of action, utilizing the word “immediately” 41 times.
- H. The emotions of Jesus are noted.
- I. Special attention is given to the call to discipleship (Mk. 8-10).
- J. More than two-fifths of the entire book deals with the last week of Christ’s life (chs. 11-16) and hence, emphasis is placed on His suffering. One scholar called Mark’s Gospel a “passion narrative” with an extended introduction.
- K. The Gospel abounds in high Christology. The deity of Christ, though not as overt as John, is clearly affirmed.
- L. Mark is the Gospel with an abrupt ending as witnessed by some texts, concluding at 16:8.

M. Mark's Gospel has a number of significant omissions given his emphasis on the activity of Jesus.

1. No genealogy given
2. No miraculous birth recorded
3. No mention of Bethlehem shepherds
4. No visit of the wise men
5. No childhood at Nazareth
6. No subjection to parents
7. No growth in wisdom and stature noted
8. No reference to pre-existence
9. No Sermon on the Mount
10. No lengthy discourses and few parables
11. No discourse on woes to Pharisees
12. No mention of wise or foolish virgins
13. No mention of Kingdom to dying thief
14. No mention of specific resurrection appearance (s)
(If Mark's Gospel ends at 16:8).

N. Gospel Theme. The traditional fish symbol of the Christian creed represents as well as anything else the thematic content of the Gospel of Mark.



“ichthus”

Ιησους	—	Jesus
Χριστος	—	Christ
Θεου	—	Of God
Υιος	—	Son
Σωτηρ	—	Saviour

“JESUS IS THE CHRIST (MESSIAH), THE SON OF GOD, THE SAVIOR”

A Brief Examination of the Title “Son of Man” in Mark

The title “Son of Man” is found sixty-nine times in the Gospels and fourteen times in Mark. It is clearly Jesus’ favorite way to refer to Himself. Why did Jesus use this term so often and what did He mean by it? Why did He not use more often the term “Christ” or “Messiah” since that is truly what He is? A look at the way the term is used can help answer those questions.

- 1) The Son of Man Serving: Mark 2:10; 2:28
- 2) The Son of Man Suffering: Mark 8:31; 9:9; 9:12; 10:33; 10:45; 14:21; 14:41
- 3) The Son of Man Coming in Glory: Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62

The title “Son of Man” is used in the Old Testament variously. In Psalm 144:3 it simply means “man.” However, in Daniel 7:13-14 it refers to One who will come with the clouds of heaven to establish God’s kingdom. Jesus uses the title to refer to Himself with both connotations. As God incarnate, He is a man who identifies with humanity as He serves and suffers on his behalf. As God, He is the coming Lord of Glory. Jesus avoided the term “Christ” (Messiah) because the popular concept of Messiah was far different than His true mission. He was a different kind of Messiah than the Jewish nation anticipated. He first came to suffer and then He would come in glory. This title allowed Him to refer to the total scope of His Messianic mission without all the political overtones of His day. It is interesting to note the title appears very infrequently outside the four Gospels.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW JESUS AND BE HIS DISCIPLE?

(MARK 8:27-38)

- I. A disciple of Jesus will accurately recognize who He is. 8:27-30
 - A. Comprehend who He is. 8:27-28 (cf. 8:14-26)
 - B. Confess who He is. 8:29-30 (cf. 1:1; 15:39)

- II. A disciple of Jesus will humbly receive what He says. 8:31-33
 - A. An earthly mind will reject what He says. 8:31-32
 - B. A heavenly mind will receive what He says. 8:33

- III. A disciple of Jesus will personally relive what He does. 8:34-38
 - A. You must die to self 8:34-37
 - 1. You must die to the self-centered life. 8:34
 - 2. You must die to the safe life. 8:35
 - 3. You must die to the self-serving life. 8:36-37
 - B. You must declare the Son. 8:38