

Gospel of Mark: *The Servant of God*

The Gospel for the Romans.

John Mark, was not an apostle (Acts 12:12f; Col. 4:10; Acts 15:37-39; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13; Mark 14:5f; Acts 10:36-42), but the son of Mary, a woman of wealth and position in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). His cousin was Barnabas, the discipler and encourager and early companion of the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:2; 4:36; Colossians 4:10). Mark was a close friend of the Apostle Peter and the interpreter for Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Most scholars agree that Mark received much of his information from the eye witness of the Apostle Peter. With this authority as the source of information the Gospel was never challenged in its inclusion in the Canon. John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey, but dropped out and returned to Jerusalem. Therefore, Paul refused to take John Mark on the second journey (Acts 15:38-40). Ten to twelve years later we find him with Paul (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). In the end Paul will ask Timothy to pick up Mark and bring him along with him to Paul in Rome, for he has found him useful for ministry (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark would have been one of the last individuals to have seen Paul before he died.

DATE: It is probably best to date Mark before A. D. 60 because Luke used Mark as one of his sources. A date in the 50's is best for Mark, not long before the Gospel of Matthew was written. Some scholars believe it was written in the 60's.

PLACE: Possibly Rome.

RECIPIENTS: The first readers were Gentiles (non-Jewish) in general, and Romans in particular.

THEME: Jesus came into the world to save sinners (10:45). Mark emphasizes the work of Christ. Christ is observed in action. Jesus is a man of action and power. This Gospel is active and fast-paced. He is seen as the servant of God. Mark's purpose was basically theological rather than historical. He is not interested in Jesus as just a historical figure, but as the Son of God and Savior. Mark omits genealogy and the birth of Christ because no one is interested in genealogy or ancestry of a slave. The Apostle John omits any reference to human descent because of his emphasis on the Deity of Christ. God has no ancestry or genealogy. The book divides into two major divisions: the Service of the Servant (1:1-10:52), and the Sacrifice of the Servant (11:1-16:20).

The Servant of God exercised the powers of Deity, His sovereign supremacy, but never on His own behalf. It was always on the behalf of others.

KEY VERSE: 1:1; 10:45

DISTINCTIVES: "(1) *Mark wrote for Gentile readers in general and Roman readers in particular.*" Therefore, he does not include the genealogy of Christ which would mean nothing to the Gentiles. He does not include the Sermon on the Mount, and the condemnation of the Jewish sects receives little attention. Unlike Matthew, Mark felt it necessary to interpret Jewish idioms of expression and Aramaic words (5:41; 7:34; 15:22), and he used Latin words not found in the other gospels (6:27; 12:42).

(2) *Mark omits Jewish references which would not interest the Romans.* "There are only about 63 quotations or allusions from the Old Testament in Mark as compared with about 128 in Matthew and between 90 and 100 in Luke."

"(3) *This gospel emphasizes what Jesus did rather than what He said.*" Miracles interest him more than parables. The author uses action words such as "at once," "immediately" more than forty times (*Ryrie Study Bible*). It is a fast paced book of action. Indeed, Mark pictures Christ in action. A. T. Robertson notes, "The framework of Mark's Gospel lies behind both Matthew and Luke and nearly all of it is used by one or the other."

(4) *"If Mark wrote in Rome, as is quite possible, his book was looked upon as the Roman Gospel and had a powerful environment in which to take root"* (Robertson).

(5) *It is the Gospel of Personal Reactions.* The reactions of the audiences of Jesus are reported at least twenty-times. Among these reactions are amazement (1:27), critical (2:7), afraid (4:41), puzzled (6:14), astonished (7:37), and hostile (14:1).

STYLE: No other Gospel moves so rapidly from one scene to another with vividness of detail, picturesqueness of description. One can almost feel the rapid movement from place to place. Vincent says, "His narrative runs." Of the 661 verses in Mark the substance of all but 31 will be found in Matthew and Luke.

It is mainly narrative and the style is direct and simple with many vivid touches, like the historical present of an eyewitness. The early writers all agree that Mark was the interpreter for Simon Peter with whom he was at one time, according to Peter's own statement, either in Babylon or Rome (I Peter 5:13). This Gospel. . . is fullest of striking details that apparently came from Peter's discourses which Mark heard, such as green grass, flower beds (6:38), two thousands hogs (5:13), looking round about (3:5, 34). Peter usually spoke in Aramaic and Mark has more Aramaic phrases than the others, like *Boanerges* (3:17), *Talithacumi* (5:41), *Korban* (7:11), *Ephphatha* (7:34), *Abba* (14:36). The Greek is distinctly vernacular. . . as one would expect from both Peter and Mark. There are also more Latin phrases and idioms. . . than the other Gospels. There is the minimum of discourse and a maximum of deed (Robertson).

A. T. Robertson says, "In my *Harmony of the Gospels* I have placed Mark first in the framework since Matthew, Luke, and John all follow in broad outline his plan with additions and supplemental material. Mark's Gospel throbs with life and bristles with vivid details. We see with Peter's eyes and catch almost the very look and gesture of Jesus as He moved among men in His work of healing men's bodies and saving men's souls.

MANUSCRIPT OF MARK 16:9-20: Does Mark 16:9-20 belong to the original Gospel as penned by John Mark? These verses are omitted by some of the best of the ancient manuscript copies. A different ending is to be found in other ancient copies. However, the majority of the manuscripts, versions, and early church fathers, give the ending which we have in the *King James Version*.

TOOLS FOR EXPOSITION: For a satisfactory study of any of the Gospels a harmony is needed. The best on the four Gospels is that by A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*. Another excellent tool is a dictionary of Biblical words. The best one in English is *An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine. *The International Dictionary of the Bible* published by Zondervan, and the two volume *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, edited by Walter A. Elwell and published by Baker Book House are

excellent for background studies.

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Title: Introduction to Gospel of Mark
Series: A Look at the Book

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